PROFILES OF THE PAST

Silhouettes, Fashion and Image

1760-1960

A joint University of Brighton, School of Humanities and Regency Town House research project
supported by Spring Board Grants Programme of the University of Brighton Alumni Association in 2013

Profiles of the Past: Silhouettes, Fashion and Image 1760-1960

Silhouette, court dress, c.1810, private collection

Edited by Lou Taylor, Annebella Pollen and Charlotte Nicklas

A University of Brighton and Regency Town House, Hove, joint project, sponsored by the Springboard Grants Programme of the University of Brighton, 2013

Profiles of the Past: Silhouettes, Fashion and Image 1760-1960

Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction: Annebella Pollen. *Peering into the Shadows: Researching Silhouettes*

Chapter 1: Bridget Millmore. *'To turn sideways' - an examination of the depiction of hair and head dresses in late eighteenth century women's silhouettes*

Chapter 2: Johanna Lance. *Cutting an elegant figure: the fashionable male silhouette, c.1790-1820*

Chapter 3: E-J Scott and Lou Taylor. *The Impact of Neoclassicism on Silhouette Art in the Late Eighteenth Century*

Chapter 4: Suzanne Rowland. *Fashion, Ageing and Identity in Regency Silhouettes, 1810-20*

Chapter 5: Pallavi Patke. *The Silhouette as Portrait and Conservation Piece - late 1830-1840s*

Chapter 6: Gabriella Mihok. *Shadow, Dress and Identity 1890-1914*

Chapter 7: Jaclyn Pyper. The *Material Culture of Nostalgia: Hubert Leslie, Baron Scotford and Twentieth Century Silhouette Portraiture*

Conclusion: Annebella Pollen. *Silhouettes into the twenty-first century*

Acknowledgements

We thank the University of Brighton's Springboard Grants Programme whose financial support enabled and encouraged the development of this joint University of Brighton and Regency Town House research project. We are particularly grateful to Nick Tyson, Curator of the Regency Town House and to Miss Diana Joll, Secretary of the Silhouette Collectors Club, for all their specialist and expert advice and help over this project, which could not have been achieved without them. We thank Ness Wood for her inspired cover design and Nick Tyson and Phil Blume for the creation of the related web site, which can be found at http://www.profilesofthepast.org.uk/

For permission to reproduce images in the introduction and conclusion, we would like to thank Charles Burns, David Simkin and John Speight and for other images we thank Worthing Museum and Art Gallery, St. Peter's House Library and the Dress History Teaching Collection, both at the University of Brighton.

With thank also each of the University of Brighton student contributors to this publication: essayists Bridget Millmore (PhD candidate, *Tokens of affection 1740 – 1840*), Suzanne Rowland (graduate of the MA History of Design and Material Culture), Johanna Lance, Jaclyn Pyper, E-J Scott, Pallavi Patke (current students, MA History of Design and Material Culture) and Gabriella Mihok (BA Hons. History of Decorative Arts and Crafts). Thanks also to undergraduate students Sophie Dobson (BA Hons. Fashion and Dress History), Yasmin Newman and Lulu Barrett (both BA Hons. Visual Culture) who joined us for meetings and discussion in earlier stages of the project.

Introduction: Peering into the Shadows: Researching Silhouettes

Annebella Pollen

The text of *Profiles of the Past: Silhouettes, Fashion and Image* offers an introduction to the design, making, consumption and socio-cultural meanings attached to the art and craft of silhouettes in England in the 1760-1960 period, based on one private collection of these fascinating portraits. It has been put together by the University of Brighton's School of Humanities *Silhouette Research Group*, with kind support from Worthing Museum and Art Gallery and St. Peter's House Library, University of Brighton. Our aim has been to further interest in these small but remarkable artefacts by drawing closer analytical links between silhouettes and the dress of their day, to position them in their material culture context and to explore their social usage. Silhouettes are diverse in form, ancient in origin and remain fascinating to the 21st century viewer even as they have become outmoded as a system for recording likeness. Whether understood as a measure of character or mere caricature, noble portrait or humble souvenir, for students of visual and material culture, decorative art, design and dress history, these intriguing, democratic images can provide a productive point of departure for exploring shifting attitudes to self-presentation, technologies of portraiture, and, not least, changes in fashion.

From their ancient origins as traced shadows – described by Pliny as the birth of art - through to variations in classical Greek friezes and side-views of Caesar on Roman coins, graphic depictions of profile outlines have eminent beginnings that belie their later status as the poor man's portrait. What are now collectively referred to as silhouettes were named after the parsimonious eighteenth century French Minister of Finance in reference to their cheapness and speed of production (his period of office was notably short-lived). This nickname also becomes a neat metaphor for the silhouette's economy of means and suggests an interesting parallel between government cuts and decorative knife and scissor work. These commercially-produced images - most commonly referred to in their own time as 'shades', 'profile miniatures' or 'likenesses' - achieved the height of their popularity as a fashionable and affordable form of portraiture in England in the eighteenth century. This is where our study begins.

Whether cut free-hand from paper, painted onto glass, plaster or ivory, traced from a projected shadow or produced by the pantograph technology of a physiognotrace

machine, silhouettes were produced in a variety of ways, in a range of styles and fulfilled a number of functions. They could act as a personal keepsake, public object of display or social unit of exchange; they could, through Lavater's pseudoscientific system of physiognomy, divine aspects of character and even analyse the soul. Alternatively, they could merely provide a quick, cheap memento of a visit to a seaside or spa town. Silhouettes may have aimed for accuracy and 'truth' as a direct and immediate trace of a person's shadow, yet they also aimed for expressiveness, with images featuring stylish embellishment and outright exaggeration, displaying the stylistic signature of the maker and his or her technical accomplishment as much as they endeavoured to capture of the sitter's 'essence'. In all cases, as our essayists demonstrate, silhouettes provided a means to perform culturally appropriate expectations of composure, deportment and dress, and as such, provide a valuable means for investigating the history of fashion and appearance.

Some silhouettes come with complete provenance: the artist's signature, the sitter's name and the address of the studio. Others are anonymous, undated shadows of the past. Through assessment of clothing - hats, wigs, collars, dresses and fichus, as well as hairstyles - it is possible at least to fix these into their time period even if the makers and subjects remain unknown. Student essayists draw on a range of resources to contextualise and analyse their selected images, including the comparison of silhouettes with painted portraits, early photographs, decorative arts, fashion plates and in particular, with extant garments. The University of Brighton's Dress History Teaching Collection contains a valuable and readily accessible range of surviving examples of dress that can help to provide dates for silhouette images and also act as a useful partner to representations of dress by showing their relationship – sometimes close, sometimes tenuous - to dress as worn.

In considering silhouettes as a resource for the study of dress history and popular image culture, intriguing questions are raised, and these underpin the research conducted for this project. To what extent can silhouettes be read as evidence of fashion and dress available and worn in the period? To what extent are these objects fantastical constructions, the stuff of idealisation and projection, the making of imaginary selves? Was their purpose to reveal or to flatter, to faithfully record or to caricature? How much artistic licence went into the shaping of the faces, for example, we shall never precisely know, though we do know that hats were borrowed, often provided by the silhouette artist. Other aspects of the image, from decorative embellishments to fantastical head pieces, may have been entirely

fictitious. Nonetheless all these sartorial manifestations were set closely into the fashions and social expectations of their day.

Contributors to this volume consider, through selected case studies, what silhouettes may be able to tell us about fantasy and actuality in self-representation and style at the height of their popularity and in their later years. Bridget Millmore, for example, argues that while silhouettes may be able to show popular styles in hairstyle and headwear during the eighteenth century, their role as markers of status and fashionable display ultimately exceeds their purported function as records of personal likeness. Johanna Lance shows how the eighteenth century dandy's need to display subtle knowledge of cut and deportment in order to maintain an effective performance of manners and taste can help explain the distinctive arrangements of bodies and clothing in silhouettes of men of the fashionable elite. Similarly, E-J Scott shows how the vogue for neoclassical style in the period, seen across architecture, decorative arts and fashionable dress, shaped the popularity and meaning of contemporaneous silhouette imagery, as it was simultaneously novel in form and steeped in historical reference. Suzanne Rowland, in addition, argues that the range of bodies and social groups represented in this democratic form of portraiture means that silhouettes can offer a window into concerns about propriety and etiquette in age-appropriate dressing across a wider demographic range than is usually accounted for.

Silhouettes in the nineteenth century underwent a fundamental transformation in meaning with the coming of photography. While a range of pre-photographic image technologies, including the physiognotrace, the camera obscura and the camera lucida had each attempted to 'secure the shadow', the ground-breaking achievements by Fox Talbot and Daguerre in fixing fleeting images via light sensitive chemicals on a range of material supports meant that the silhouette's position as a cheaply available form of rapid portraiture was threatened from the 1830s. In particular, once the cheap, fast and reproducible form of carte-de-visite photography was established in the 1860s, many scholars note that the popularity of the silhouette entered a terminal decline. Painter Paul Delaroche is purported to have declared, upon hearing of the announcement of photography, 'From today, painting is dead!' Silhouette producers may have felt similar pessimism, yet this was not completely borne out. As contributors show, silhouettes continued in production for a hundred years after the coming of cartes de visite, and in the postscript to this publication, the silhouette's 21st century renaissance is explored.

While photography's claim to verisimilitude was more convincing than the silhouette's, and its spread was rapid and its costs relatively minimal, its mechanical means of production necessarily separated it from the craft of silhouette manufacture. Three-dimensional silhouette embellishment techniques such as bronzing and gilding became more popular from the 1830s and it is likely that these additions of depth and detail were developed as photography became a competitor. The introduction of colour, texture and luxurious finish distinguished silhouettes as a form of decorative art distinct from photography's mass-production. Only those with access to specialist, expensive technical equipment and knowledge could produce photographs until the widespread circulation of push-button cameras and roll-film in the last decades of the nineteenth century, while silhouettes, at their most basic, never required much more than paper and knife. These simple, demotic means give silhouettes a greater claim to the status of folk art than nineteenth century photography. In terms of craftsmanship, photography was dismissed by some artists for requiring little in the way of technique; its vulgar, mechanical and commercial aspects positioned it in an uncertain position in the Victorian hierarchy of the arts. At its best, the production of finely detailed and sensitively rendered silhouettes was demonstrably a specialist skill. Although it never achieved institutional or academic recognition as art, to produce a recognisable likeness, freehand, in a few short minutes was an impressive performance, just as it is now in the hands of its few remaining practitioners.

In terms of the framework for this study, photographs may seem to offer a privileged means of ascertaining the actuality of historic fashion and dress compared to the silhouette image. In fact, while photographs were appreciated from the start for their ability to depict every button and bead of a garment, it is well-known that all aspects of photographic portraiture were tightly managed. In the theatrical space of the photographic studio, a range of props from backdrops to books, furniture to potted ferns, classical columns and carpets could be assembled according to preference. The technical imperatives of the machinery and the prescriptive advice of the photographer meant that all aspects of pose and costume were shaped by social and cultural requirements. Studio photographs, for all of their beguiling realism, were as constructed as silhouettes. Sitters dressed for the photographer, avoided certain fabrics and colours, borrowed clothes and adopted recommended attitudes. Both formats therefore reveal performances of the self for posterity rather than providing simple windows into the past. This is not to say, of course, that neither

form of portraiture is without historical value; each is richly instructive about social and cultural expectations for self-presentation. In figures 1-3 below, for example, each from the 1860s, the silhouette, photograph and fashion illustration all depict fashionable feathered hats for women, in a range of different ways. Viewed together, their similarities and differences offer an opportunity for the comparative evaluation of their shortcomings and advantages for the description and interpretation of dress.

Contributors to this volume who focus on silhouettes after the coming of photography show how silhouettes provided distinctive records of fashion alongside other forms of contemporaneous image-making. Pallavi Patke's chapter, for example, considers conversation-piece silhouettes in the mid-1800s and shows how decoration, illumination and ultimately imagination enabled silhouette artists to compete with photographers in the making of an elegant record of their fashionable subjects. Gabriella Mihok's chapter reveals how silhouettes show not only the fashions of the time, but also their stylistic closeness to other forms of fashion representation such as fashion illustration, which also continued into the twentieth century in parallel with the emerging art of fashion photography. Jaclyn Pyper, in her study of early 20th century silhouette artists in Brighton, shows how the existence of photography gave practitioners an enemy to position themselves against, in order to argue that mechanical reproduction was mere 'soulless efficiency' and that the silhouette embodied simplicity, antiquity and artfulness. In situating silhouette production against other forms of depiction, one medium's shortcomings opens up a space for the appreciation of what the others can offer. Photography, in any case, did not immediately kill off silhouette production. In some cases, such as with Brighton's own profilist and photographer, George Azariah Lloyd, working on the Chain Pier in the 1860s, silhouettes were sold in parallel with newer image technologies (Figs. 4 and 5). Photography would eventually supersede the silhouette as a system of affordable portraiture but the two were not mortal enemies. The introduction of photography offered new directions for the silhouette's stylistic development, influencing its methods and redefining its meanings and purpose.

While photography was described at its inception as a magic mirror, silhouettes have their own particular powers. They could act as divination tools within physiognomy and their creation has been likened, poetically, to the shedding of skin and to the absolution of sin in the Catholic confessional. Whether pseudoscience or sideshow, art or craft, precious imagery or vernacular practice, silhouettes remain striking. Assertive in their graphic outlines, they frame bodies and souls and record facts and

fantasies. By peering into these historical shadows, the student contributors to *Profiles of the Past: Silhouettes, Fashion and Image* cast new light on this endlessly fascinating subject.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Figure list.

Fig. 1: Silhouette portrait of unknown woman in hat, c.1865-70. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 2: Photograph of unknown sitter, c. 1860, cartes-de-visite album. University of Brighton Dress History Teaching Collection, with thanks.

Fig. 3: Fashion illustration from *Modes Illustreés, Journal de la Famille*, No 41, Sept. 1868. Toilettes de chez Mme. Rossignon, Paris. With thanks to St. Peter's House Library, University of Brighton.

Fig. 4: Silhouette portrait of Naomi Fuller (1841-1912), c. 1860s, attributed to George Azariah Lloyd, profilist on Brighton's Chain Pier, 1863-1880s. Courtesy of Janet Pennington, reproduced with permission of David Simkin, Sussex Photo History http://www.photohistory-sussex.co.uk

Fig. 5: Carte-de-visite photograph, c. 1873, by George Azariah Lloyd. Reproduced with permission of David Simkin.

Chapter 1

'To turn sideways' an examination of the depiction of hair and head dresses in late eighteenth century women's silhouettes

Bridget Millmore

'To turn sideways' was an eighteenth century phrase which no longer resonates today unless you are familiar with the practice of having one's 'shade' or silhouette painted. Looking at the 'sideways' portraits of a selection of silhouettes of women from the 1780s and 1790s opens up other possibilities for the twenty-first century researcher. From among the potential approaches to the study of these silhouettes including an examination of the styles of dress and accessories or the vogue for giving and collecting likenesses in scrapbooks, I have chosen to focus on the depiction of the fashion for 'big hair'.

The two silhouettes I am discussing in this chapter date from the mid 1780s to the early 1790s when the fashion for elaborately tall hairstyles had already reached its zenith. The vogue for these developed slowly in previous decades until by the late 1770s, the most extreme and fashionable hair and wig styles following Paris taste, were worn high over frames which grew wider and wider towards the top of the head (See Fig. 1).

The first miniature profile is of the bust of an unknown woman who has a striking coiffure ornamented with ribbons and bows (Fig. 2). Around her neck and shoulders is a buffon (spelt variously buffon, buffoon and buffont) which is tied with a bow at the throat. The 'buffon' was a large piece of linen or diaphanous fabric bunched up over the bust and was particularly fashionable in the 1780s.[1] The woman's hair at the back is in the form of a 'banging chignon', that is a thick loop of hair. This may have been her real hair but was often a false piece. The fashion for the buffon and chignon helps date the portrait to about 1785 (Fig. 4).[2] The sitter is wearing a highly decorative cap with a pleated edge which shapes the forehead. Above this are large bows of ribbon tied at the front and back which show off an exceptionally high dome of frizzed hair. The dome sits on the top of the head near the front unlike other

1 Aileen Ribeiro, *A Visual History of Costume: The Eighteenth Century* (London: Batsford, 1983) 142.
2 Sue McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists and Their Work, 1760-1860* (London: Philip Wilson for Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1978) 115.

profiles of the period where the hair or toupée is sloping backwards.[3] Whilst Louisa Cross in her chapter 'Fashionable Hair in the Eighteenth Century' argues that big hair was 'a more economical way of keeping in the fashion than buying material to make up new items of clothing',[4] I would suggest that the time and labour involved in not only creating but maintaining such hair styles demonstrated a display of status and wealth through the theatricality of an extreme performance.

Painted in a black base colour on paper, the contrasting details of hair and bouffant were achieved by the use of thinned water colour.[5] Silhouettes produced by paint on paper were popular in the period 1760-1860.[6] The portrait is the work of Thomas Wheeler whose early shadow portraits on paper date from about 1783.[7] His career spanned the period 1783-1810. Wheeler's surviving trade label dates from 1794 and offers 'profiles on glass that will not wash off or on paper that may be sent in a letter at any distance without injury'. Working in Windsor he made home visits and particularly drew attention to head wear in his advertising with the words, 'Ladies and gentlemen waited on at their own Houses at any Hour, and it would prevent loss of Time, if the Head-dress was adjusted previous to his attending'.[8]

As Marcia Pointon comments in her book on portraiture, 'the body…was a work of art in eighteenth century ruling-class society; how one wore one's patches, how one held one's fan, the cut of one's clothes, the shape of one's wig – all these made of the body a mobile cluster of signifiers'.[9] As well as the dress and accessories that Pointon refers to, the height of hair style was clearly an indication of conspicuous consumption. The creation of big hair required an extraordinary investment in time and labour. Figure 3 shows a French example of 1786. This notion of time spent on arranging hair resonates with Thomas Wheeler's appeal to sitters that their headdress is in place before he visits to paint their silhouette. Unlike men's wigs, which Margaret Powell and Joseph Roach in their article on *Big Hair* explain, were 'a

---

3 Georgine de Courtais, *Women's Headdress and Hairstyles in England from AD 600 to the Present Day* (London: Batsford, 1973) 80.
4 Louisa Cross, 'Fashionable Hair in the Eighteenth Century: Theatricality and Display,' *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*, ed. Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang (Oxford: Berg, 2008) 15.
5 Information about the silhouette provided by the Regency Town House www.rth.org.uk
6 McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists*, 13.
7 McKechnie, *British Silhouette* Artists, 644.
8 Mrs E. Nevill Jackson, *Silhouettes: A History and Dictionary of Artists* (New York: Dover Publications, 1981) 152.
9 Marcia R. Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1993) 142.

great convenience to daily grooming because they could be put on and taken off as needed and maintained at a remove', women's hairstyles required an ostentatious amount of time to prepare behind closed doors before making a theatrical first impression in public.[10]

The discussion of the theatricality of hairstyles forms the crux of my investigation. My question concerns what silhouettes depicting tall hairstyles and head dresses can reveal about the performance of fashion in the late eighteenth century. Before I explore this theme in detail let me introduce the second silhouette. Again the eye is drawn to the shape of the headdress (Fig. 4). However in this image most of the hair is not visible as it is hidden beneath an 'undress cap'. These were the mob caps or 'dormeuses' worn indoors usually made of lawn or muslin and which varied in size according to the hairstyles of the day (see Fig. 5, French 'dormeuse' of 1785). What is particularly distinctive about this silhouette is the half-moon profile of the cap. In the silhouette under discussion the 'egg' shape of the cap is emphasised by the detail of the ribbon which creates a distinctive peak at the top of the portrait. The woman's ears are hidden below the edge of the cap but a chignon is visible at the nape of the neck. The frill of the cap edge is achieved by alternating thick and thin brush strokes.[11] The bouffant around the shoulders is very full in contrast to the tight bodice of the dress which emphasises the smallness of her waist. Painted on paper by John Butterworth with a black base colour, the contrasting detail of the bouffant, hair and cap are achieved by the use of thinned water colour.[12] According to Sue McKechnie who includes this same profile in her book, *British Silhouette Artists and Their Work, 1760-1860*, it is possibly of a Mrs Butler and dates from 1793.[13]

John Butterworth was another portrait and silhouette artist of the late eighteenth century in Leeds. He came from a family of engravers and worked primarily in engraving but also painted silhouettes on paper and on ivory for jewellery settings.[14] His trade label read 'Opposite the Vicarage, Kirkgate, Leeds'.[15]

Both silhouettes are distinctive in terms of the height of the hair style and the shape

10 Margaret K. Powell and Joseph Roach, 'Big Hair,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38.1 (2004): 96.
11 McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists*, 510.
12 Image and information about the silhouette provided by Nick Tyson, Curator, The Regency Town House', www.rth.org.uk and Miss Diana Joll, Secretary, The Silhouette Collectors Club, www.escis.org.uk/Entry/View/Silhouette_Collectors_Club
13 McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists*, 510.
14 McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists*, 380, 526, 684.
15 Jackson, *Silhouettes*, 88.

of the cap. Domed and half-moon shaped, these profiles reflect a period of extremes in fashion, a version of which is made visible in the appearance of the women sitting for their silhouettes for Wheeler in Windsor and Butterworth in Leeds. Not only was hair tall, the shape of bodices and skirts was designed to create a curvaceous and full figure.[16] The height of the hair and the amplitude of the bosom are in contrast to the black profile of each face which appears small in comparison. Indeed the height of the hair in Figure 2 is much greater than the length of the face. Viewed in this way, the hair, cap, frills, bows and buffon dominate so that the sense of the individual succumbs to the representation of a woman in fashionable attire. The aspiration for recognition and social identity through the wearing of stylish head wear sidelines the identity of the individual in the profile by drawing attention away from the outline of her face.

Even though silhouettes were advertised as offering a 'true likeness' of a person, the portraits remain in the realms of the representational conveying more about the social identity of status and values of a person than the actual person. Discussing the role of portraiture in the eighteenth century, Pointon suggests that the portrait offered a means for social groups and the individuals within it to 'represent themselves to themselves' as part of what she refers to as 'an endless network of communicative acts'.[17] In terms of hairstyles and headdresses such communicative acts occupied women for great lengths of time interacting with a range of people. Indeed the fashion for extreme hair fuelled a need for the services of hairdressers and servants able to create and maintain such hairstyles and also an array of accessories and equipment to achieve such results. Cushions for example made from horsehair were used to push up the hair which was then held in place by 'pomatum', a glue-like paste made from animal grease and coloured by powders.[18] Entries in contemporary newspapers included advertisements from servants offering to 'dress' lady's hair and from, for example, Mr Sharp, a lady's hairdresser and tête maker in London promoting his 'cushions, chingnons, bows, brades, ornament and plain curls'.[19] The notion of communicative acts also involved women not only 'behind the scenes' in the preparation of head dresses but also displaying their hairstyles in public places. As Cross explains, the commercialisation of leisure led to increased opportunities for people to show off their 'conspicuous consumption' in venues

16 Ribeiro, *A Visual History of Costume: The Eighteenth Century*, 15.
17 Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, 4.
18 Cross, 'Fashionable Hair in the Eighteenth Century,'16.
19 *Morning Chronicle*, 15 July 1776.

including theatres, pleasure gardens and assemblies. Just as a silhouette allowed people to represent themselves to their family and friends, so appearing in 'arenas of display' allowed women to parade their fashionable hairstyles whilst noting those of others.[20] As mentioned, the performance of tall hair styles was often witnessed at the theatre and opera. Indeed headwear led to some unexpected incidents in such locations. Injury was averted, for example, at the Covent Garden Theatre in February, 1776, when a man threw a 'keg of liquor' from the upper gallery. A lady's head dress apparently prevented it falling on anyone leading to the comment in the newspaper report that this was 'the first time that the absurd and ridiculous fashion of dressing Ladies heads …has been productive of any good'.[21] More serious and indeed fatal for both parties was a duel which resulted from an incident at the Opera in January 1796. A Major Sweetman was sitting behind a lady 'whose head-dress of fashionable feathers prevented his view to any part of the house'.[22] An argument ensued between the major and the lady's companion with mortal consequences for both men.

Caricaturists on both sides of the Channel were quick to mock the absurdity of big hairstyles picking up on the discourse of conspicuous consumption and male perceptions of female obsessions with fashion and fripperies (Fig. 6, Promenade au Marais, late 1770s).[23] The grander the head dress became, the clearer it was to onlookers that much time and expenditure had been taken up to create such theatrical extravagances. However there was a limit to such extreme hair. The social performance of hair was not a 'one off' event but part of a daily routine which involved lengthy preparations. Margaret Powell and Joseph Roach describe how hair 'represents a primary means of staking a claim to social space on the occasion of first impressions'.[24] However this was a claim to first impressions which necessitated endless repetition as each performance required its own daily cycle of hair styling. Endless that is until the moment when too tall became 'distasteful and wantonly wasteful' and the fashion for 'puffed up' hair went out of fashion. The decline was aided in part by the introduction of William Pitt's tax on hair powder in 1795.[25]

20 Cross, 'Fashionable Hair in the Eighteenth Century,' 23.
21 *General Evening Post*, 28 February 1776.
22 *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 12 January 1796.
23 Cross, 'Fashionable Hair in the Eighteenth Century,' 19.
24 Powell and Roach, 'Big Hair,' 83.
25 McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists*, 116.

My discussion has explored two silhouettes of women through the artifice of fashionable styles of headdress. In enquiring into what these two shades might reveal about the performance of fashion in the late eighteenth century, I have highlighted the contrast between the display of conspicuous consumption in hairstyles which required a substantial investment of time and money, and the idea of portraiture represented in two women sitting for their silhouettes. My suggestion is that the identities of these two women were suppressed because their profiles encourage us to focus on the fashionable head wear and accessories they have chosen to represent themselves. As a result the observer is unable to engage with any sense of the individual but is drawn instead to the representational silhouette of a fashionable woman keen to show off her finery. The contrast between the personal and the generalized is heightened by the physical difference in the dimensions of head wear and shadow portraits. Hairstyles could reach as tall as 36 inches in some cases compared to a silhouette measuring no more than 3½ inches high. However I am not suggesting that a silhouette is any less significant on account of its size. On the contrary I would argue that the miniature nature of the silhouette concentrates the eye on the theatricality of the late eighteenth century fashion for headwear by providing a stage on which to project the 'first impressions' of turning sideways.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Figure List.

Fig. 1. Hairstyles from 'Cabinet des Modes,' 1785, from Auguste Racinet, *Le Costume Historique*, Firmin Didot Paris, 1888, plate 391-392, vol. 5. Lou Taylor Collection, with thanks.

Fig. 2. Silhouette of an unknown woman paint on paper, about 1785, by Thomas Wheeler, property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 3. Hairstyle from 'Cabinet Des Modes ou Les Modes Nouvelles' 1786. Creative Commons Attribution to E K Duncan www.ekduncan.com

Fig. 4. Silhouette painted on paper, by John Butterworth, 1st February, 1793, from the collection of the late J.C. Woodiwiss, now the property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 5. *Dormeuse* from 'Cabinet des Modes,' 1785, from Auguste Racinet, *Le Costume Historique,* Firmin Didot Paris, 1888, plate 391-392, vol. 5. Lou Taylor Collection, with thanks.

Fig. 6. 'Promenade au Marais,' anonymous French cartoon of about 1777, reproduced in the *Art Journal,* London, 1889, p. 114

Bibliography.

Cross, Louisa. 'Fashionable Hair in the Eighteenth Century: Theatricality and Display'. *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*. Ed. Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang. Oxford: Berg, 2008. Print.

de Courtais, Georgine. *Women's Headdress and Hairstyles in England from AD 600 to the Present Day*. London: Batsford, 1973. Print.

Jackson, Mrs. E. Nevill. *Silhouettes: A History and Dictionary of Artists*. 1938. New York: Dover, 1981. Print.

McKechnie, Sue. *British Silhouette Artists and Their Work, 1760-1860*. London: Philip Wilson for Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1978. Print.

Pointon, Marcia R. *Hanging the Head; Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1993. Print.

Powell, Margaret K. and Joseph Roach. 'Big Hair'. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38.1 (2004): 79-99. Print.

Ribeiro, Aileen. *A Visual History of Costume: The Eighteenth Century*. London: Batsford, 1983. Print.

Chapter 2

Cutting an elegant figure: the fashionable male silhouette, c.1790-1820

Johanna Lance

The use of the profile portrait as a source for the study of dress history has one particular advantage: with no distracting patterns, texture or seductive colour, the prevailing outline or silhouette of the period is made clear and unambiguous. This dramatic assertion of the fashionable profile is particularly apposite within the period 1785-1820 because this was the period of the development and heyday of the cult of the Regency dandy, the point at which menswear became preoccupied with tailoring, ultimately prioritising fit and form over the rich decoration and embellishment which had characterized elite male dress for centuries.

The importance of the relationship between dress and social status in this period cannot be overstated. The fashions and intellectual modes of the 1790s and at the beginning of the nineteenth century reverberated with the impact of the French Revolution even in England. Simplification of men's dress had been introduced into France through the popularity for English tailoring from the 1770s (see Fig.1, Young man in tailored jacket, Paris, 1785). At the same time, whilst young Revolutionary men abandoned the wearing of wigs in France, in Britain they survived through the 1790s into the early nineteenth century (see Fig. 2, Engraving of boys' dress - hat and wig – as worn in Britain, abut 1785). The decimation of the French aristocracy during the Terror dramatically brought an end to excessive luxury and made the conspicuous consumption of the elite classes politically suspect in a revolutionary climate that preached equality. Enlightenment, revolution and classicism had been topics of conversation among the educated, 'polite' social circles since the mid-eighteenth century and were reflected in the general simplification of men's dress. In an era of scientific and industrial development and the emergence of a new, upwardly mobile middle class, appearances and manners were scrutinized as never before.[26]

The Regency in England was a period of great contrasts. While the Prince spent unimaginable sums on his self-indulgent lifestyle at Carlton House in London and the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, and the fashionable set followed suit, a large

26 Edward Maeder, *An Elegant Art: Fashion and Fantasy in the Eighteenth Century* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Museum of Art, 1983) 15.

proportion of the population struggled to feed themselves following the implementation of the draconian Corn Laws. The early decades of the nineteenth century saw war with France, great civil unrest, riots and the fear of revolution. For the wealthy, well-dressed man about town, however, the Regency was a golden era – new gentlemen's clubs such as White's, Brooks and Boodle's were founded around St James', elegant new shops filled with enticing commodities lined the curve of Nash's graceful new colonnaded façade of Regents Street. 'Gambling and gluttony'[27] were the fashionable vices for the leisured class, and a premium was put upon dilettantism, opulence and the pursuit of pleasure. Significantly, the fashionable arenas of the late Georgian period – assembly rooms, sea-side promenades and spas such as Brighton or Bath, pleasure gardens like Ranelagh or Vauxhall – were public spaces in which the stylish enacted the drama of seeing and being seen.[28]

The dandy, epitomised by figures such as George 'Beau' Brummell and others in his set, was essentially a non-aristocratic upstart, cutting a dazzlingly dressed figure and strutting onto the social stage. Without land or title, Brummell nevertheless infiltrated the Prince of Wales' inner circle and set the fashionable tone for the best part of two decades. Myths about Brummell's dedication to the art of dress are legion – he is said to have dressed in front of an awestruck audience each morning, in an elaborate ritual which might take two or more hours; to have washed his boots in champagne, and to have summoned sedan chairs to travel even a hundred yards lest his boots be sullied by the street.[29] His image was etched famously by Robert Dighton in 1805.

However apocryphal such anecdotes may be, Brummell and his acolytes undoubtedly crystallised trends inspired by military and sports clothing which had been developing in men's attire for some years (see Fig. 3, silhouette of about 1790), becoming synonymous with a sleekly tailored, impeccably detailed appearance that James Laver refers to as the 'repudiation of conspicuous and gorgeous attire'.[30] Over the last third of the eighteenth century, the types of practical clothing worn by gentlemen for walking, riding and hunting on their country estates had come increasingly to influence fashion. Incorporating the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'return to nature' and the neoclassical focus on the unencumbered,

27 Venetia Murray, *High Society: A Social History of the Regency Period, 1788-1830* (London: Viking, 1998) 1.
28 Murray, *High Society,* 90-91
29 James Laver, *Dandies* (London: Wiedenfield and Nicholson, 1968) 14-28.
30 Laver, *Dandies,* 28.

natural form, the 'Anglomania' vogue for clothing adapted to typically English country pursuits carried with it a political charge of notions of personal freedom. Ewa Lajer-Burcharth argues that the disruption in fashion after the Revolution indicated a renegotiation of the self. The male body, barely disguised under tightly cut cloth and sheer breeches, became a beautiful object to survey for pleasure and also an agent of narcissism.[31]

These silhouette portraits are suggestive of the influence of the dandified cult of tailoring and a new masculinity which spread from the smartest clique of the 'Ton' to anyone who had pretensions to being smartly dressed. As Laver observes, 'fit… was the new fetish:'[32] for the first time, the fit of a man's coat, rather than its materials or embellishments, became the test of elegance. Norah Waugh states that 'by the end of the eighteenth century English tailors became the leaders of men's fashions… Beau Brummell, not an innovator but a perfectionist, set the seal on the new fashion… he had the floppy cravat starched, the muddy boots polished and above all, he demanded perfect cut and fit'.[33] William Wellings (active 1778-96) painted full-length silhouettes on card stock but also advertised that he could paint just as well for 'Lockets, Bracelets, Rings and Fausse Montres'.[34] He included a wealth of additional detail in his profiles, framing his figures with interior settings or landscape features, suggesting that he may have studied the composition of contemporary oil portraits.

The unknown sitter (Fig.4) in this silhouette of about 1790 by Wellings is depicted standing beneath a tree, his faithful hound beside him. His stance is one of studied informality, one hand rests upon his hip, while the other grasps a walking cane or riding crop. The outline of the tree suggests a rural context, he gazes out over the landscape. Here the figure is clad in a tail coat, the cutaway front modified from the frock coats of the earlier eighteenth century and made less bulky for riding; a plain linen cravat at his throat. His knee-breeches are skin-tight and button just above the broad cuffs of his riding boots. He wears a broad brimmed hat, bridging the transition from the eighteenth century tricorne to high-crowned top hat is upon his head. Madelaine Ginsburg observes that during the post-Revolutionary period and the Napoleonic wars, a variety of hat shapes were fashionable – the modified

31 Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines: the Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999.
32 Laver, *Dandies*, 34.
33 Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Men's Clothes, 1600-1900* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964) 108.
34 Emma Rutherford, *Silhouette: The Art of the Shadow* (New York: Rizzoli, 2009) 65.

tricorne, the military-inspired bicorne, and the emerging high-crowned top hats which would come to dominate male headwear for the nineteenth century.[35] Figure 5 shows a silhouette of about 1795, painted on paper by Mrs Bull, or Beetham, of a young man with a tall crowned, wide-brimmed hat, his wig tied back with a narrow ribbon, an exceptionally high collar to his tailored jacket and extravagantly ruffled shirt. Men's hats were typically made from felt made from rabbit or beaver fur.

Figure 6, a silhouette by John Miers (1758-1821), shows a male figure standing by sundial and dates from about 1800-1810. The standing figure, an unknown model, leans in an easy, relaxed manner against a sundial atop a stone column. He has removed his gloves and grasps them loosely in his right hand. He wears the cutaway tailcoat and tight knee-breeches, linen cravat and top hat of the fashionable gentleman of the period. He does not appear to be wearing a wig beneath his hat, reflecting the move away from *ancien regime* powdered artificiality to the new naturalism.

If we compare these images to a professionally painted oil portrait of the same era, we can recognize similarities in the subject's dress, pose and mannerisms. For example, the famous portrait by Jacques-Louis David's of his brother-in-law, Pierre Seriziat, of 1795, now in the Louvre collection, shows the sitter in a casual pose seated outdoors on a boulder with his legs crossed, his hand on his hip. Gloves, riding crop and hat are the essential accessories.

The new emphasis on tailoring placed an imperative upon dressing elegantly, yet unobtrusively. Olga Vainshtien argues that among the dandy cult, a new visual code of 'conspicuous inconspicuousness' emerged,[36] based upon attention to detail, a visual statement which might be encoded through the correct folds of a starched neck cloth or the number of buttons on the cuffs of breeches, and crucially, visible only to fellow initiates.

This new minimal aesthetic extended also to physical stance and gesture - the poses in portraits of the period such as the above reveal a studied ease. Some of the crazes of this most image-conscious period afforded opportunities for new mannerisms, for example, the vogue for snuff among the smart set created a wealth of novel gestures

35 Madeleine Ginsburg, *The Hat: Trends and Traditions* (London: Studio Editions, 1990) 74.
36 Olga Vahnshtein, 'Dandyism, Visual Games and the Strategies of Representation,' *The Men's Fashion Reader*, ed. Vicki Karaminas and Peter McNeil (Oxford: Berg, 2009) 94.

and emphasized an essential fashion accessory, the beautifully decorated snuff box. It was not easy to maintain a composed nonchalance while inhaling snuff (without sneezing) but by the time of the Regency the taking of snuff had developed into a fine art, while the proffering of snuff socially had become a ritualised 'performance… designed as much to show off beautifully manicured hands and jewellery as for the pleasure of tobacco'.[37]

Figure 7, the silhouette of the head and shoulders of an unknown man, depicts him in a cravat that is so highly-wound around his neck that his chin barely surfaces above the collar. Note how the anonymous artist has captured the strain upon the cloth between the buttons on the over-stuffed, too-tight coat. The fashionable line of men's dress was figure hugging and left nothing to the imagination – there was nowhere for physical imperfections or unsightly bulges to hide. This image is reminiscent of the humorous caricatures of the men of fashion made by graphic artists of the period. As Diana Donald has shown, amid the boom in satirical prints in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century there was a demand for caricatures of fashion - artists such as Gillray, Cruikshank and Rowlandson mercilessly lampooned the frivolities of the fashionable and the idle rich.[38] Print shops, such as Ackermann's 'Repository of Arts' in the Strand drew great crowds to see the latest topical prints and caricatures in their windows.[39] Dandies' affectations were a rich source of amusement, as prints such as *The Dandy Club* (1818), by Richard Dighton, illustrate.[40] The collar and cravat in particular was always depicted as impossibly tall for comic effect.

The silhouette portrait was a record of a single, transitory point in time – much as a photograph is today. Quick and cheap to produce, and therefore accessible to a wide market, the profile was an important democratic social document. For an expensive portrait in oils, expected to last for generations to come, the sitter would take great pains over dress and pose – often posing, as Aileen Ribeiro has shown, in historical or 'exotic' fancy dress in order to achieve an effect of timelessness.[41] By contrast, the

37 Murray, *High Society*, 251.
38 Diana Donald, *Followers of Fashion: Graphic Satires from the Georgian Period* (London: Hayward Gallery, 2002) 8-10.
39 Murray, *High Society*, 93.
40 See Richard Dighton, 'The Dandy Club,' published by Thomas McLean, 1818, British Museum, accession number 1948.0214.805.
41 Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe 1715-1789* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002) 275-282.

silhouette was absolutely of the moment, possessing a striking contemporary freshness and evoking the ephemeral essence of style.

These portraits provide a fragmentary view of fashionable male attire, gesture and pose at the point at which tailoring and the refinement of the male silhouette achieved absolute sovereignty. They are not elite portraits of elated social celebrities; the sitters identities are not recorded, their facial features are obscured. Yet they reveal the influence of the revolution in male dress throughout the social scale, and their very exemption of extraneous detail leave a powerful impression of a masculine ideal reduced to the essentials of well cut cloth and a dignified bearing. This new minimal aesthetic in which each detail or gesture was encoded is revealing of a society in which appearances were minutely scrutinized as never before. The survival of these profile portraits bespeaks a cultural obsession with studied elegance – with striking a pose and cutting a figure in the social scene. A seemingly narcissistic preoccupation with spectacle and superficial appearances reflects the contemporary need for self-analysis and the critical examination of a rapidly changing world.

Fig. 1

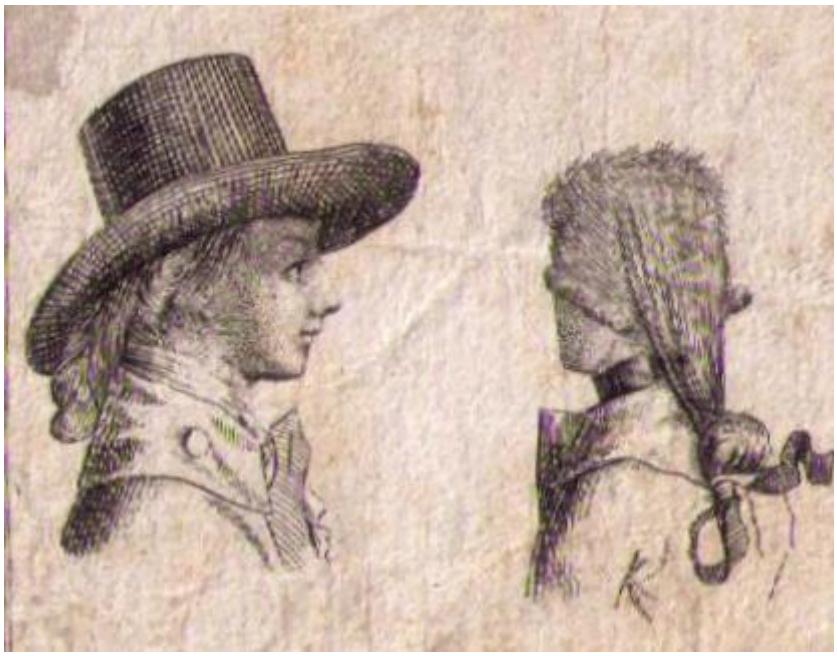

Fig. 2

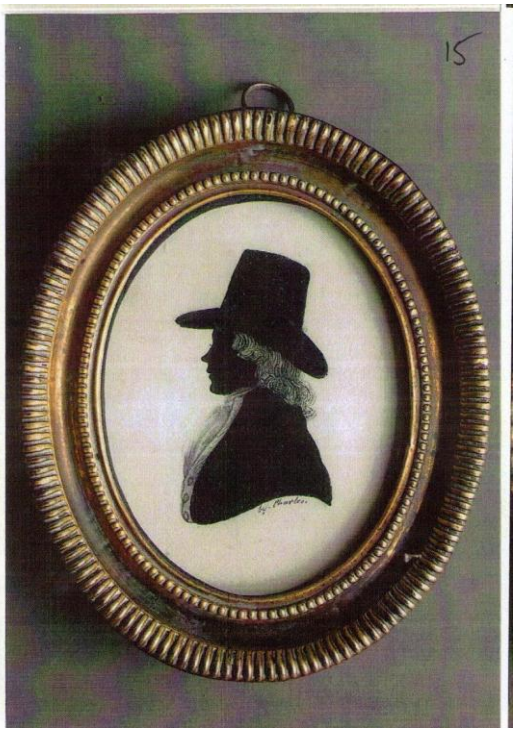

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Figure List.

Fig. 1. Young man in tailored jacket, Paris, 1785, from *Le Cabinet des Modes*, Plate 391-392, from Auguste Racinet, *Le Mode Historique,* (Paris, Firmin Didot, 1888).

Fig. 2. Engraving of boys' dress (hat and wig) British, about 1795. University of Brighton Dress History Teaching Collection.

Fig. 3. Silhouette of man in hat and wig, tall and cravat, English, 1790 by Charles. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 4. Silhouette of unknown man with dog by William Wellings, about 1790. Private collection, with thanks.

Fig. 5. Silhouette of a young man with high tailored collar, by Mrs Bull, or Beetham, about 1795. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 6. Silhouette of man standing by a sundial, about 1795, by John Miers. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 7. Silhouette by T. London of an unknown man, about 1800-10. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Bibliography.

Donald, Diana. *Followers of Fashion: Graphic Satires from the Georgian Period*. London: Hayward Gallery, 2002. Print.

Ginsburg, Madeline. *The Hat: Trends and Traditions*. London: Studio Editions, 1990. Print.

Harvey, John. *Men in Black.* London: Reaktion, 1995. Print.

Hill, Draper. *Fashionable Contrasts: Caricatures by James Gillray*. London: Phaidon, 1966. Print.

Karaminas, Vicki, and Peter McNeil,. *The Men's Fashion Reader*. Oxford: Berg, 2009. Print.

Lajer-Burcharth, Ewa. *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999. Print.

Laver, James. *Dandies*. London: Wiedenfield & Nicholson, 1968. Print.

Laver, James. *Taste and Fashion from the French Revolution to the Present Day*. London: Harrap, 1946. Print.

Maeder, Edward, ed. *An Elegant Art: Fashion and Fantasy in the Eighteenth Century*. Los Angeles: Los Angleles Museum of Art, 1983. Print.

Murray, Venetia. *High Society: A Social History of the Regency*, 1788-1830. London: Viking, 1998. Print.

Ribeiro, Aileen. *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe 1715-1789*. New Have and London: Yale University Press, 2009. Print.

Rose, Dennis. *The Life, Times and Recorded Works of Robert Dighton (1752-1814): Actor, Artist & Printseller.* Lewes: Baxter, 1981. Print.

Rutherford, Emma. *Silhouette: The Art of the Shadow*. London, New York: Rizzoli, 2009. Print.

Vahnshtein, Olga. 'Dandyism, Visual Games and the Strategies of Representation'. *The Men's Fashion Reader*. Vicki Karaminas and Peter McNeil. Oxford: Berg, 2009. Print.

Vickery, Amanda. *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009. Print.

Waugh, Norah. *The Cut of Men's Clothes, 1600-1900.* London: Faber and Faber, 1964. Print.

Chapter 3

The Impact of Neoclassicism on Silhouette Art and Fashion in the Late Eighteenth Century

E-J Scott and Lou Taylor

This chapter examines the impact of the Neoclassical revival in art, design and fashion in the late 18th through the assessment of one specific silhouette - that of Elizabeth Carnegie, the Third Countess of Hopetoun of 1785-87 created by one of England's finest silhouette artists of the period, John Miers (see Fig.1).[42]

The art of the Silhouette creates intrigue in the eye of the beholder because the sitter's shadow portrait lacks physical facial detail. R. L. Megroz comments that 'For many people the very simplicity - perhaps also the dreamlike gloom – of the ordinary black silhouette is a special attraction.[43] This art form uses the blank, expressionless profile to conceal the inner-self that is so often captured in facial expression. Neoclassical in their essential aesthetic pursuit as an artistic form, late eighteenth and early nineteenth century silhouettes represent the ultimate use, as David Irwin explains, of 'contour or line, so important for neoclassical art … described as the chief aim of the Greek artists'.[44] The silhouette also reflects the complexity of thought that a simple line can unravel and in so doing, reflects the power of the artist's brush to depict the inquisitiveness of the human mind. In its most elevated form, the humble silhouette bears testimony to the power of art to capture and reveal the quintessential essence of humanity.

Neoclassical art and design in Britain reached its height of popularity towards the end of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. Judy Marle comments that 'Neo-Classical art, born in the second half of the eighteenth century, was the outcome of a re-examination and re-interpretation of the Classical heritage in Western art [whereby] men began to look afresh as the great works of antiquity'.[45]

Borne of this revival, silhouette portraiture captures the sitter not only in a particular

42 This is now in a private collection.

43 Rodolphe Louis Mégroz, *Profile Art Through the Ages* (London: The Art Trade Press, 1948) 3.

44 Irwin, David E., *English Neoclassical Art: Studies in Inspiration and Taste* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1966) 24.

45 Judy Marle, *Neo-Classical England* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1972) 79.

moment in time, but also in the enduring and mythical world of the neo-classical past. Elizabeth Edwards (writing about photography) notes that 'Stillness invites evocation, contemplation and a certain formation of affective memory'. [46] Silhouettes are constructed and framed memories painted or cut out as keepsakes by silhouette artists, which make the ageing, life and ultimately the time of the sitters, stand still. They are as paused as they are posed. Now highly collectible, late eighteenth and early nineteenth century silhouettes adorn walls that do not belong to the homes of the original sitters. They find themselves in the hands and homes of complete strangers where once they were prized portraits of loved ones. They survive nonetheless as *lieux de memoire,* defined by Pierre Nora as 'moments of history […] like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded'. [47]

The development of the art of silhouette making in the mid-eighteenth century was embedded in the neoclassical revival in the arts of the period, triggered in part by Johann Joachim Wincklemann's examination of ancient Roman sites taking place at Herculaneum (1738) and Pompeii (1748), [48] (See Fig. 2, glass amphora from Pompeii, pre 75 AD). Popular interest thereafter never waned, so that in 1809, Ackerman's *Repository of Arts and Manufactures,* was advising its readers on travel directions to find the ruins of Pompeii.

Fashionable neoclassicism can be seen in fine art, architecture, interior decoration and the decorative arts and in the design and form of silhouettes. Irwin comments that 'The antique in the eighteenth century was an idol on a pedestal providing criteria of judgement for works of art.[49] Many grand country homes in Britain reflect the pursuit of the neoclassical ideal within architecture and interior design, especially in Scotland, the birth place of Robert, John and James Adam, leaders of the first flowering of neoclassical architecture in Scotland and England from 1760s. Robert Adam, who completed his five-year Grand Tour under the patronage of the Earl of Hopetoun, had re-designed the grand state apartments of the Earl's vast mansion, Hopetoun House, outside Edinburgh, in neoclassical style by 1767.[50]

---

46 Elizabeth Edwards, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory,' *Material Memories*, ed. Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford: Berg, 1999) 226.

47 Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,' *Representations* 26 (1989) 12.

48 See Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Herculaneum: Past, Present and Future* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2011) 367 and Peter Connolly, *Pompeii* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 12.

49 Irwin, *English Neoclassical Art,* 21.

50 'A History of the Hope Family,' *Hopetoun*, Hopetoun House Preservation Trust [n.d.] www.hopetoun.co.uk/History-of-the-Hope-Family.html, accessed May 27, 2013

One of the popular forms used in neoclassical design was the reworking of the classical profile, as seen in Greek vase painting and in Roman cameos and glass, for example (see Fig. 2) and featuring in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century neoclassical style silhouettes. Hickman notes that 'It is clear that silhouette portraiture existed in a profile-conscious age'. [51] In 1787-89, Elizabeth Carnegie, daughter of Lord Northesk, and the Third Countess of Hopetoun, commissioned the leading British silhouette artist of the day, John Miers, to paint her profile's shadow in miniature. Sue McKechnie explains that Miers started his career in his home town of Leeds. In the early 1780s he worked in Newcastle, as an advertisement of September 1, 1783, in the *Newcastle Courant* confirms:

> J. Miers desires to return his sincere thanks to the Ladies and Gentleman of NEWCASTLE for their favours conferred upon him in the Multiplicity of Business he is engaged in, and desires to inform them that through the encouragement that he has had and the Particular Desire of a Number of number of families who had not an opportunity of Sitting to him last week, he is induced to stay the Remainder of the week and positively no longer. [52]

By the mid 178os, McKechnie notes that Miers had settled in Edinburgh as confirmed by the registration of the birth of his daughter, Harriet, on August 19th 1787 at the Methodist Chapel in Edinburgh. During this period Miers was well recognised and took the profiles of well known Scottish families, including Robert Burns and his 'Clarinda', Mrs McLehose, in 1787.

McKechnie writes of the silhouette portrait of Elizabeth, Countess of Hopetoun that this was a portrait of the very highest quality, confirmed by the label on the back of the portrait which reads 'J. Miers No 10'. It shows the Countess with the new, lower, fashionable curled hairstyle, full on the head and the sides and falling down on to her shoulders. It is decorated with delicate transparent fabric and ribbons. McKechnie explains that work bearing this Trade label No 10 indicates the very best of his work which 'is very fine'. She writes that in this period: 'The geometrically patterned rendering of costume in detail, characteristic of his earlier work, is superseded by a more finished style'. She comments that on profile of women of this

51 Peggy Hickman, *Two Centuries of Silhouettes* (London: A. and C. Black, 1971) 13.

52 Sue McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists and Their Work, 1760-1860* (London: Philip Wilson for Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1978) 626.

period their ribbons are almost always painted as transparent. This transparency is a feature of the Countess's silhouette, especially in the rendering of her gauze headdress, with her hair tied in bows, which has a ghostly quality typical of Mier's high levels of skill and ability. This became his signature finish, appearing in several pieces produced at the height of his career at the end of the 1780s and into the 1790s. [53] This delicate head dress, with its clear deep folds of transparent fabric, falls elegantly down the back of the Countess's hair style and on to her shoulders which are draped in a delicately painted fichu.

It is significant that Silhouette historian Mrs E. Neville Jackson shows a Miss Harriet Knapp, also profiles by John Miers at much the same date, [54]with very similar fabric folds and ribbons in her hair. Morgan May found a further two silhouettes with this same folded fabric hair decoration - firstly 'A Beauty of Leeds' and secondly 'Alice Blackburn'. Both of these are undated. [55] Even Clarinda's ribbon hair decoration is very similar. [56] It is possible that the Countess may indeed have owned and worn just such a pretty headdress but it is also possible that it may only have existed in the imagination of Miers and represents a basic generic fashionable hair decoration of about 1787. This fashionable hairstyle and the fashions that went with it came from Paris just before the Revolution (see Figs. 3 and 4). Moderated versions are seen in many formal portraits of British women in the mid 1780s by painters such as Romney and Reynolds.

This silhouette shows a glimpse of the Countess's fashionable, bouffant, transparent fichu worn over her shoulders and across the front of her bodice. The Yale Centre for British Art owns a miniature of the Countess by Richard Cosway, painted in watercolour and gouache on ivory. It is dated to 1789, two years or more later than the Miers silhouette, and shows her looking out directly from the picture with her large brown eyes, rosy cheeks and with the newly fashionable hair style, which was by then puffed out more fully at the sides. Her hair is powdered. She is wearing a fine white fichu tied around her throat in a bow and her all white dress with frilling at the top of her sleeves has a white fichu over her breasts. The contrast of this all white image with her all black Miers shadow silhouette could not be greater.

---

53 McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists*, 632.

54 See 'Miss Harriet Knapp' by John Miers in Mrs. E. Neville Jackson, *Silhouette: Notes and Dictionary* (London: Methuen, 1938) plate 16.

55 See 'A Beauty of Leeds' and 'Alice Blackburn' in Leonard Morgan May, *A Master of Silhouette: John Miers: Portrait Artist, 1757-1821* (London: The Westminster Press, 1938) 16 and 23.

56 See 'Robert Burns, the Poet and his Beloved "Clarinda"' in May, *A Master of Silhouette*, 47-48.

In conclusion, the fashionability and beauty of Mier's silhouetted depiction of the Third Countess of Hopetoun, probably taken in Edinburgh or at her home in 1785-87, reflects the practice in the late eighteenth century for wealthy and upper middle class women to have their profile taken by eminent silhouette artists in the neoclassical style, a style which would have suited the neoclassical interior decoration of their homes. Irwin quotes Shaftsbury: 'Art is governed by rational rules, not uncontrolled feelings. To create beauty the artist must unite order and harmony, he must look at the work of ancients as his mentor'. [57] As highly prized in the late eighteenth century as it is today, this silhouette makes much use of neoclassical techniques and ideals through its use of profile, whilst also making reference to the work of artists from the ancient past as well as making the sitters look beautiful and fashionable. The Countess's silhouette is at the same time modern in its neoclassical fashionability, a forerunner of silhouette styles which were to endure for at least another forty years. These silhouettes survive today as a meeting point of mid 1780s artistic, cultural and social sensibilities – fashionable and tangibly enduring.

57 Irwin, *English Neoclassical Art*, 21.

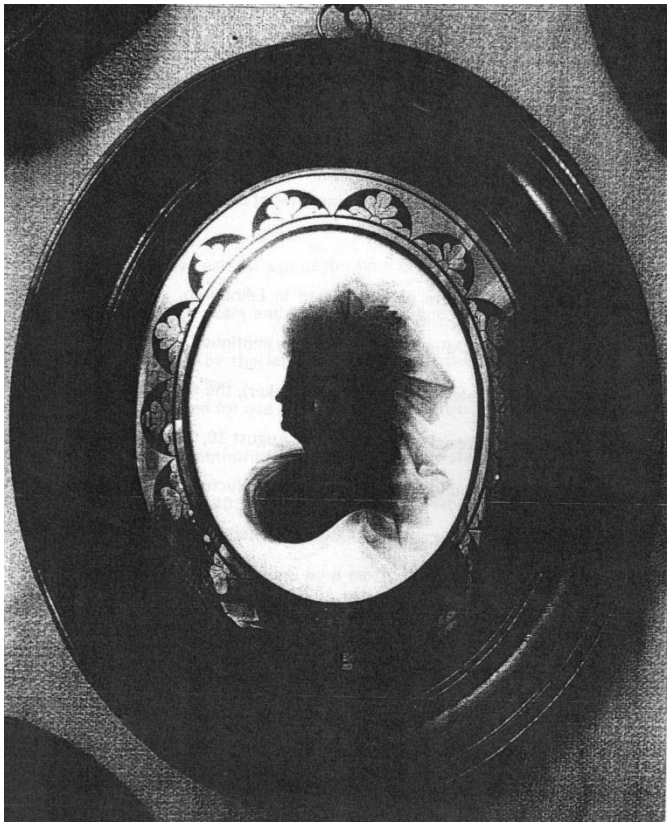

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Figure List.

Fig. 1. Silhouette of Elizabeth Carnegie, the Third Countess of Hopetoun, by John Miers, 1785-87. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 2. Imperial Roman blue glass amphora, with white cameo decoration, pre 75.AD, from the Villa of the Mosaic Columns in Pompeii from Henry Wallis, 'The Antique Glass at the Naples Museum,' *The Art Journal*, 1889, 315. With thanks to St. Peter's House Library, University of Brighton.

Fig. 3. Auguste Racinet, *Le Costume Historique,* Firmin Didot, Paris, 1888, Plate 391-392, Hairstyles of 1785 from *Le Beau Monde.* Lou Taylor Collection, with thanks.

Fig. 4. Auguste Racinet, *Le Costume Historique,* Firmin Didot, Paris, 1888, Plate 391-392, Paris Fashions, February to August 1786 from *Le Beau Monde,* (Lou Taylor Collection with thanks).

Bibliography.

Connolly, Peter. *Pompeii.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. Print.

Edwards, Elizabeth. 'Photographs as Objects of Memory'. *Material Memories*. Ed. Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley. Oxford: Berg, 1999. Print.

Irwin, David E. *English Neoclassical Art: Studies in Inspiration and Taste*. Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1966. Print.

Hickman, Peggy. *Two Centuries of Silhouettes*. London: A. and C. Black, 1971. Print.

'A History of the Hope Family'. *Hopetoun*. Hopetoun House Preservation Trust [n.d.]. Web. 27 May 2013. www.hopetoun.co.uk/History-of-the-Hope-Family.html.

Jackson, Mrs. E. Nevill. *Silhouettes: Notes and Dictionary*. London: Methuen, 1938. Print.

Marle, Judy. *Neo-Classical England.* London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1972. Print.

May, Leonard Morgan. *A Master of Silhouette, John Miers: Portrait Artist, 1757-1821.* London: The Westminster Press, 1938. Print.

McKechnie, Sue. *British Silhouette Artists and Their Work, 1760-1860*. London: Philip Wilson for Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1978. Print.

Mégroz, Rodolphe Louis. *Profile Art Through the Ages: A Study of the Use and Significance of Profile and Silhouette from the Stone Age to Puppet Films.* London: The Art Trade Press, 1948. Print.

Nora, Pierre. 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire'. *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24. Print.

Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew. *Herculaneum: Past, Present and Future.* London: Frances Lincoln, 2011. Print.

Chapter 4

Fashion, Ageing and Identity in Regency Silhouettes, 1810-20

Suzanne Rowland

The theme of this chapter is the representation of age and identity through depictions of women's fashion in Regency silhouettes. Silhouettes offer a unique perspective on age because unlike the stylised fashion plates of contemporary publications they offer a realistic portrayal of a sitter. Most silhouette artists achieved this precision by the use of a mechanical aid with a light source to capture a profile in shadow which was then traced around by the artist.[58]

Historically this was an era of upheaval. The illness of King George III in 1811 resulted in a Regency period presided over by his son Prince George. The decade began with Britain still at war with France, a war that ended in 1815 with the Battle of Waterloo. In general it seems that British women's fashion was more subdued than French fashion during the war, a fact that was evident when relations resumed and English women, who had lowered the waist back to its natural position, found themselves deeply at odds with Paris fashion style, which had left the high waist in place. The French periodical *Le Bon Genre* made fun of English fashions, writing of the 'disgrace of English women's little flat hats, long lank corsets, and badly cut skirts'.[59] High waists returned quickly in Britain and thus styles of dress in both countries both retained Neoclassical lines still inspired by the draped garments of ancient Greek statues introduced in the late 1790s. [60]

The four female silhouettes chosen for this study are of unknown sitters and feature the head and shoulders to the baseline. Much can be discovered from this area because it was the primary focus for detail and embellishment in fashionable dress of the time. Hair was either dressed or adorned with a cap or a hat for outdoor wear, and bodices for both indoor and outdoor garments were closely fitted and emphasised the bust. Below the bust, the skirt, attached under the bust and with fullness gathered at the centre back to allow for ease of movement, reached to the ankle.

---

58 Sue McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists and Their Work, 1760-1860* (London: Philip Wilson for Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1978) 16.
59 Millia Davenport, *The Book of Costume* (New York: Crown, 1948) 824.
60 Grace Evans, *Fashion in Focus 1600-2009* (Chertsey: Chertsey Museum, 2011) 77.

The four silhouettes selected here span a range of ages. In terms of age-related dressing, Aileen Ribeiro claims the Regency period marked the resurgence of 'neglected notions of suitability of dress for different ages, classes and occasions' which was to continue and be developed throughout the Victorian era.[61] This idea is certainly present in a contemporary book of etiquette, *Regency Etiquette the Mirror of Graces,* 1811. The author, identified only as a 'Lady of Distinction' wrote: 'there is a propriety in adapting your dress to the different seasons of your life, and the peculiar character of your figure, there is likewise a necessity that it should correspond with the station you hold in society'.[62] This is the theme of this chapter.

Although attitudes to age suggest that women should dress to be less visible as they aged, Amanda Vickery has shown that fashion continued to be of interest to women as they matured. In *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, Vickery shows through the use of contemporary letters that news of latest fashion was disseminated by letters between female correspondents of all ages.[63] Women in London and other fashionable centres wrote detailed descriptions to their friends and relatives explaining the latest modes.

In order to contextualise the selected silhouettes, four literary characters have been chosen, each character features in the fiction of Jane Austen. Jane Austen's heroines in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Emma* (1815) are all young women of marriageable age. A further method of contextualisation used here has been comparison with other articles of dress, including surviving garments, caps and jewellery from the collection at Worthing Museum and Art Gallery. One of the difficulties in matching the particular hats featured in the silhouettes with extant hats in museum collections and with contemporary fashion plates is, however, that hats and bonnets were so abundant in number and were in addition often personalised by the owner. In *Dame Fashion* the author provides us with an overview of fashionable dress in London and Paris during the Georgian era. In Paris, 'it is said that between the Restoration and 1830 one could have easily found ten thousand

61 Aileen Ribeiro, *The Art of Dress: Fashion in England and France, 1750-1820* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995) 126.
62 *Regency Etiquette: The Mirror of Graces,* 1811 (Mendocino, CA: R.L. Shep, 1997) 85.
63 Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998) 175-7.

different shapes in the capital – and what hats!'[64] (Fig. 1) In *Pride and Prejudice,* Lydia Bennett explains how she will personalise her new purchase, 'I have bought this bonnet. I do not think it is very pretty; but I thought I might as well buy it as not. I shall pull it to pieces as soon as I get home, and see if I can make it any better…Oh! But there were two or three much uglier in the shop; and when I have bought some prettier-coloured satin to trim it with fresh, I think it will be very tolerable'.[65]

The Young Woman

This silhouette was painted on paper by I or J Hallam (1819-24) and has a trade label on the reverse side (Fig. 2). Little is known about the artist who appears to have travelled and may have had royal patronage.[66] The young sitter is wearing evening dress and is dressed for attending a grand ball, a socially acceptable public space where she could be expected to fulfil her supposed destiny and meet a potential husband.

The sitter is fashionably dressed and wears a bandeau decorated with flowers. Her hair is formed into a top knot *a la Grecque*.[67] Hallam used fine brush strokes to capture the sitter with coarser brush strokes used to paint the hair and flowers. Her drop earrings and double row of beads can be seen in fashion plates of the decade. The short necklace was a feature favoured by Hallam.[68] Her high-waisted Empire gown has a square neck which is decoratively rimmed around the edge and which is typical of elegant evening dressing in this period (See Fig. 3). Worthing Museum and Art Gallery has a comparable bodice in pale pink satin, of about 1815-18 which fastens at the centre back with drawstring ties at the neck and waist (Fig. 4). The museum's bodice has signs of cut threads at the waistline indicating that it was once attached to a skirt. The skirts for these gowns were long straight pieces of fabric, gathered onto the fitted bodice which could be removed and remodelled at a later date.[69]

The sitter maintains an upright pose in the silhouette, aided by stays or a corset. The author of *Regency Etiquette* warned young women against wearing overly tight stays

64 Julius M. Price, *Dame Fashion: Paris-London (1786-1912)* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, London, 1913) 47.
65 Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 1811 (London: Penguin, 1994) 211.
66 McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists*, 410.
67 The style is described in this way in *Ackermann's Repository of Arts, Literature, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics*, July 1810, 27.
68 McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists*, 410.
69 Gerry Connelly, Curator of Historic Collections, personal interview with author, 28 March 2013.

because of the potential detriment to their development. 'Those finely rounded points which mark the distinction and the grace of the female form, and which the artist, enamoured of beauty, delights to delineate with the nicest accuracy-are, by the constant pressure of these *stays*, rendered indistinct, and in a short time are entirely destroyed'.[70] Significantly to the themes of this chapter, the author advised that stays should be: 'restricted to the too abundant mass of fattening matronhood'.[71]

The Young Mother

This silhouette is skilfully painted on the under surface of convex glass by Hinton Gibbs, 1790s-1822 (Fig. 5). Gibbs used two techniques, one was almost completely in black and was used for male sitters, the other style, used for female sitters had a translucent effect. For his female sitters Gibbs applied a finger painted base, possibly using a mix of watercolours and gum Arabic, he then used a hatching technique to create the transparent effect. In this silhouette Gibbs deftly distinguishes between the fine texture of the muslin dress and the sprig patterned fabric of the cap.

This unknown sitter is possibly a young married mother. The young mother is a secondary character in Jane Austen's fiction and this sitter could almost be a portrait of Emma's sister Isabella, in the novel *Emma*. Although the exact date of the silhouette is not known, the dress has a high waist, a style that would remain until the end of the decade.[72] A fashion plate from *Ackermann's Repository*, 1810 shows a similar high-waisted outfit worn by a mother in morning dress, and wearing 'a matron hood of lace, tied across the crown'.[73] McKechnie confirms that: 'because of the accuracy with which Gibbs painted contemporary women's clothing, his work throws much light on the fashions of the time'.[74] Worthing Museum and Art Gallery has an indoor bonnet of spotted muslin c.1820 which is similar in shape to the one in this silhouette (Fig. 6).

A further feature of this silhouette is a dark string of beads worn around the neck. It is possible that the jewellery was made from hair because the beads are of a uniform shape and appear to be textured. Worthing Museum and Art Gallery has a necklace from the same period made from beads of plaited hair which fastens with a gold clasp (Fig, 7). This could have been the hair of a child or close relative of its owner,

70 *Regency Etiquette,* 104.
71 *Regency Etiquette,* 105.
72 Evans, *Fashion in Focus*, 86.
73 *Ackermann's Repository*, March 1810, 184.
74 McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists*, 410.

and worn as mourning jewellery. Janice Miller suggests that this use of hair of the deceased would: 'sustain a presence of the individual in the absence of the body itself'.[75]

The Matron

The silhouette in Figure 8 was painted by Edward Foster 1762-1864, who set up his business as a professional silhouette artist in London at a fashionable address, The Strand, in around 1811. Foster is known to have travelled widely with his work and his career was long and successful. He died at the age of 102. Sue McKechnie notes that from c.1817 he featured a royal coat of arms on his trade labels. Throughout his career his work is generally categorized into two types – black profiles and red profiles. This silhouette is painted in the red style on card using a sepia base colour with gilding highlights. The oval silhouette is set into a square frame with a brass hanger attached in the shape of an acorn with two leaves, a style often used by Foster.[76]

The sitter in this silhouette (Fig. 8) could be seen as a character often depicted in the novels of Jane Austen - the older mother, or matron. This character had a duty to secure a propitious marriage for her children. In *Pride and Prejudice* she is represented by Mrs Bennett, 'If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield…and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for'.[77]

Married women wore a range of indoor cap styles which covered most of the head and hair, and which remained popular right through the 1830s. The sitter in Fig. 8, however, is wearing another style of head wear - a fashionable oriental-style turban. There are several suggestions as to the origin of this popular style, for example, in 1811, *Ackermann's Repository* highlights the fashionability of a 'Moorish turban bonnet'.[78] Dress historian Millia Davenport claimed that the English were twisting India scarves into turbans for nearly half a century before turbans were made up as headdresses. By the 1830s turbans, so fashionable a few decades earlier, were worn only by 'matronly mothers, massed along the sidelines at balls'.[79] The sitter in this

75 Janice Miller, 'Hair without a Head: Disembodiment and the Uncanny,' *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion,* ed. Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang (Oxford: Berg, 2008) 188.
76 McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists*, xvii
77 Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 11.
78 *Ackermann's Repository*, August 1811, 113.
79 Davenport, *The Book of Costume,* 827.

silhouette of about 1810-20, when turbans were still fashionable, is wearing hers, which draped around the crown of her head, with large circular earrings, a necklace and a lace collar. The high neckline indicates that this is day wear.

The Old Maid

Painted on card by Edward Foster, this silhouette (Fig.9) is signed under the baseline. Foster has used fine brush strokes and a three dot technique to indicate transparent fabric, a technique which can be seen in use in his depiction of this bonnet.[80] The bonnet in the silhouette has a deep double frill that frames the face and is similar in general style to a plain white linen 'boudoir cap' of about 1820-30 at Worthing Museum and Art Gallery (Fig. 10). Both caps are made up in sections gathered up into narrow bands to help with the gentle shaping. The silhouette cap is prettily trimmed with ribbons on the top of the crown and at the centre back. Similar ribbons may have been removed from the Worthing Museum cap when it was laundered, or perhaps at the time of storage. Such caps of fine linen or muslin, always white, required much work – some women embroidered their own *broderie anglaise* trimmings, following patterns available in women's magazines, such as a 'Muslin pattern' in 'Ackerman's Repository of Arts and Manufactures,' April 1st, 1824 (Fig. 11). Wearers had to make sure that these caps were laundered, starched, ironed and regularly re-trimmed in order to look pristine, respectable, crisp and elegant.

The older woman depicted here is dressed in keeping with the fictional character of an 'old maid'. The young and wealthy Emma is chastised by Mr Knightley for her disrespectful conduct toward the 'old maid,' Miss Bates, 'How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation?'[81] Although Emma assumes the spinster Miss Bates will never marry, she has the knowledge that she will have enough income and property to support herself in her old age and relishes the thought of maintaining her independence.[82] 'A single woman with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid!'[83] This stereotype is rejected by historian, Amy M. Froide, and her observation seems pertinent to the respectably dressed sitter in this silhouette, 'old age did not have to be a period of decline, dependency and isolation. On the contrary it could be a period of growth,

80 McKechnie, *British Silhouette Artists*, 403
81 Jane Austen, *Emma,* 1815 (London: Penguin, 2006) 393.
82 Austen, *Emma,* 91.
83 Austen, *Emma,* 91.

autonomy and enjoyment'.[84]

Conclusion

While the names of the women in many of these silhouettes may often be lost, their formal profiles are still with us, offering an intimate view into the past. The examples chosen here span a range of ages and show that women dressed to conform to the conventions of contemporary etiquette of their day by wearing age-appropriate clothing. Thus these silhouettes, together with surviving examples of dress and accessories, period fashion commentary and literature, can tell us much about both the lived experience and the social expectations that dominated the lives of these women from their youth into their old age.

84 Amy Froide, 'Old Maids: the Lifecycle of Single Women in Early Modern England,' *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500,* ed. Lynn A. Botelho and Pat Thane (Harlow: Longman, 2001) 104.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig.3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Figure List.

Fig. 1. Hat, for half mourning, from *Costume Parisien,* 1812. Lou Taylor Collection, with thanks.

Fig. 2. Silhouette by I or J. Hallam, painted on paper, trade label on reverse. The property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 3. Detail of ball dress, 1812, from *Costume Parisien.* Lou Taylor Collection, with thanks.

Fig. 4. Back of pink satin bodice, 1815-18, no. 1717/A. Worthing Museum and art Gallery, with thanks.

Fig. 5. Silhouette painted on convex glass, of woman in muslin cap tied beneath her chin, by Hinton Gibbs, 1810-20. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 6. Indoor bonnet, muslin, about 1820, 1961/690A. Worthing Museum and Art Gallery, with thanks.

Fig. 7. Necklace made from beads of human hair, about 1810-30. Worthing Museum ref: 1961/1219.

Fig. 8. Silhouette by Edward Foster, painted on card, of a woman wearing a turban, 1810-20. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 9. Silhouette by Edward Foster, painted on card, of a woman wearing a cap with deep frill and ribbons, 1810-20. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 10. Boudoir cap, 1820-1830, no. 1963/1885. Worthing Museum and Art Gallery, with thanks.

Fig. 11. Pattern for muslin embroidery, 'Ackermans Repositpry of Arts and Manufactures', April 1st, vol. 111, 1824. With thanks to St. Peter's House Library, University of Brighton.

Bibliography.

Austen, Jane. *Emma*. 1815. London: Penguin, 2006. Print.

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility.* 1813. London: Penguin, 2003. Print.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. 1811. London: Penguin, 1994. Print.

Davenport, Millia. *The Book of Costume*. New York: Crown, 1948. Print.

Evans, Grace. *Fashion in Focus 1600-2009: Treasures from the Olive Matthews*. Chertsey: Chertsey Museum, 2011. Print.

Froide, Amy M. 'Old Maids: The Lifecycle of Single Women in Early Modern England'. *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500.* Ed. Lynn A. Botelho and Pat Thane. Harlow: Longman, 2001. Print.

Regency Etiquette: The Mirror of Graces. 1811. Mendocino, CA: R. L. Shep, 1997. Print.

McKechnie, Sue. *British Silhouette Artists and Their Work, 1760-1860*. London: Philip Wilson for Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1978. Print.

Miller, Janice. 'Hair without a Head: Disembodiment and the Uncanny'. *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion.* Ed. Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang. Oxford: Berg, 2008. Print.

Price, Julius M. *Dame Fashion: Paris-London (1786-1912).* London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1913. Print.

Ribeiro, Aileen. *The Art of Dress: Fashion in England and France, 1750-1820.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995. Print.

Vickery, Amanda. *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998. Print.

Chapter 5

The Silhouette as Portrait and Conversation Piece- late 1830s-40s.

Pallavi Patke

Introduction: Lou Taylor

The 1830s and 40s saw a rise in the popularity of silhouettes of family groups, usually and significantly including children. These were a development from the tradition of small size family group portraits, in oils and watercolour, which became particularly popular from the early eighteenth century in England. These status-giving conversation pieces show a couple or a family in a domestic setting, indoors or outdoors, often seated or standing around a table, as if in natural conversation, with artefacts indicating their hobbies and activities such as embroidery work, fishing and hunting. The entire family is present from grandmothers to babies and from fathers to little boys and pet dogs. On view are also elegant, fashionable domestic items - a porcelain tea service, a bowl of fruit or sewing paraphernalia, as in Joseph Francis Nollekens, *The Tylney Family in the Saloon at Wanstead House* of 1740.[85] The portrait of *The Family of Eldred Lancelot Lee* by Joseph Highmore of 1736 features elegant fashions worn by his widow and daughters, along with family jewellery and also their pets – a squirrel and two mastiffs.[86] Children are a significant feature of such paintings, nearly always shown in their best dress playing with their expensive toys and pets. Nollekens's portrait of 1745 of *Two Children of the Nollekens Family, probably Jacobus and Maria Sophia with a Top and Playing Cards,* is typical.[87] Richard Dorment, reviewing the 2009 exhibition *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life* held at the Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh, noted that 'the advantage of such a setting is that it depicted the family, in the interior of their home 'surrounded by property and possessions to indicate their social status or financial success'.[88] The early Victorian period saw a revival of interest in this genre of painting, as in the 1840-43, Edward Landseer conservation piece *Windsor Castle in Modern Times.* [89] Richard Dorment comments that this shows

85 This portrait is in the collection of Fairfax House, York, accession number CT198.327.
86 This portrait is in the collection of the Wolverhampton Art Gallery.
87 This portrait is in the collection of the Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection
88 Richard Dorment, 'The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life - The Conversation Piece,' *Daily Telegraph,* 4 May 2009.
89 This painting is in the Royal Collection, Royal Palaces, Residences and Art Collection.

the young Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and their eldest child Victoria, Princess Royal, at home surrounded by their pets and the dead game that Albert has just brought home from the day's shoot. Whatever political message the picture was intended to convey – and much has been made of Queen Victoria's wish to replace memories of her dissolute uncles with images of her own happy marriage and contented home life – it would be very hard to enter a room in which this picture hung and not find yourself remarking on the touching and comic details.[90]

The popular family silhouettes, featured in Pallavi Patke's text below, date from the very same 1840s period as Landseer's *Windsor Castle in Modern Times* and feature all the same key elements of the conversation piece genre – the elegantly dressed family group, typically sitting or standing around a fashionable table laid out with decorative domestic objects.

Pallavi Patke

In the 1830s and 1840s the making of silhouettes became a profitable business, as a customer could quickly obtain reasonably priced and beautifully painted/cut portrait profiles. Silhouette creation developed into a profession as more and more artists practised the craft. The mid-to-late eighteenth century was the prime time for making silhouettes, which in Britain were then mostly painted. The invention of the device *physignotrace* by Lavater, which was later perfected in 1786 by Gilles-Louis Chrétien, became seminal in expediting the process of silhouette tracing and broadening the scope of creativity. [91] The conventional art of making silhouettes manually was thus gradually overshadowed by its mechanized version, after which the art declined in popularity until the advent of the most prolific silhouette artist, Auguste Edouart, in 1825.[92] His contribution marked the revival of hand-cut silhouettes. Peggy Hickman notes that for fourteen years Edouart practised as an exemplary silhouette artist producing many masterpieces and then in 1839 set off to America where he is known to have created profiles of some important personalities.

---

90 Dorment, 'The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life - The Conversation Piece'. See also Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life* (London: Royal Collection, 2009).

91 Roslyn Margaret Rosenfeld, *Miniatures and Silhouettes in Montreal, 1760-1860*, Master's thesis (Montreal: Concordia University, 1981) 10.

92 Helen Laughon, Nel Laughon, and Fidèle-Augustin-Amant-Constant Edouart, *August Edouart: A Quaker Album: American and English Duplicate Silhouettes, 1827-1845* (Richmond, VA: Cheswick Press, 1987) 388.

Edouart is also specifically recognized for making interesting family compositions,[93] or conversation piece silhouettes,[94] which are examined here.

George Angelo Crowhurst was one such specialist, based at the fashionable address of 40 Old Steine, Brighton, from about 1830. Hickman notes that he specialized in full length silhouettes in black, brown or grey with a touch of gold.[95] Fig. 1 shows a conversation piece silhouette painted by Crowhurst on February 6th, 1843. It is painted on card, with the base colour being black, painted over with tints and shades of other colours. The family is believed to be that of Mr. and Mrs. Ransome.

As more and more artists produced quality shaded silhouette profiles, it became all the more necessary for them to bring in some innovation in technique from time to time as novelty touches fetched a higher price. Hand painting, as shown in Crowhurst's silhouettes, continued and indeed flourished in the 1830s and 40s. Painting enhanced the scope for detailing, such as rendering shadows on the ground or the delineation of women's frills in their fine muslin collars, the intricate design running along the wooden table and other domestic props such as the quill pen, paper and book shown on the table in the composition. A feature of this silhouette is the use of colour and gold paint. Crowhurst's aim was to create an image of the Ransome family in a pictorial setting, as real, lifelike and as three-dimensional as possible, but without rendering the facial expressions.

Hickman writes that W. Phelps of Drury Lane, London was the first to have introduced colour into silhouettes, in the eighteenth century. He 'painted black profiles on plaster, or buff paper with clothing added in soft shades of blue, apple green or lilac'.[96] Penley Knipe confirms that 'such scenes were popular oil painting subjects in the 18th century'.[97] The type of paint used for shading the figures in the Ransome family silhouette composition is unknown, but it would seem that if the silhouettes were first painted in black, the most suitable choice of the second layer of colouring would be oil paint to avoid mixing and muddying of colours. The trousers of the Ransome boys and the gentleman, however, seem to have a washed effect, predominantly obtained through the medium of water colour/ink. Emma Rutherford

93 Peggy Hickman, *Silhouettes, A Living Art* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1975) 32.
94 Penley Knipe, 'Paper Profiles: American Portrait Silhouettes,' *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 41.3 (2002): 203-223.
95 Hickman, *Silhouettes*, 32.
96 Hickman, *Silhouettes,* 30-34.
97 Knipe, 'Paper Profiles,' 205.

points out that 'toward the middle of the nineteenth century it is probable that gold paint became available, making life much easier for those artists intent on highlighting hair and garments'[98] and indeed some effects of this sort are visible in this conversation piece as well. Gold/ ochre paint has been used to accentuate the blondeness of the hair, but not on all characters. It is used as an indicator of the age difference between the two adults and four youngsters. While the young lady in blue on the left, the little girl in red on the right and the two boys, all have streaks of gold in their hair, the older woman on the right and the gentleman on the left, wearing a tail coat, both have dark grey hair with a tinge of white.

Another striking feature in this composition is the distinguished appearance of the two women. Daphne Bullard confirms that it was a common etiquette practice in the 1840s for women to remove their outdoor hats when indoors in their own homes but not when visiting the homes of others.[99] Bullard notes that 'caps were worn indoors by the married, or single "mature" woman'.[100] This helps confirm that the woman on the right (Fig.2) is an elderly figure and we can deduce from her youthful profile that the blonde-haired woman, shown writing in the silhouette, was the younger of the two, perhaps in her late teens or early twenties, possibly the daughter of the older woman. The little girl in her red, full skirted dress and carrying a flower basket, wears white cotton pantalettes.

Much can be deduced too from the style of clothes and general appearance in a silhouette. Here the dress of the young seated woman, with its oval shaped neckline, falling collar, slim and full length sleeves and gently gathered skirt does indeed indicate a date of the mid-1840s. This is confirmed by her hair style with its low chignon and ringlets over the ears (see Fig. 3, Fashions for November 1844, *Illustrated London News)*. The Ransome conversation piece also offers a useful age-related view of men's and boys' dress of the mid-1840s. Whilst the father wears his smart, tailored, cut away tail coat, his two sons wear short, close-fitting box or pea jackets, revealing their high shirt collars. The younger son carries a flat cap.

A second undated conversation piece silhouette, from the Royal Victoria Gallery (Fig. 4), shows another unnamed family group (father, wife, two daughters and two sons). Whilst the wife is seated in a decorative chair facing her two daughters, the

98 Emma Rutherford, *Silhouette* (New York: Rizzoli, 2009) 96.
99 Daphne Bullard, 'Hats, Bonnets and Hairstyles 1830-60,' *Costume* 3, supplement 1 (1969): 24-25.
100 Bullard, 'Hats, Bonnets and Hairstyles,' 24.

youngest son, in a dress, pulls a toy horse, whilst his older brother, wearing a long-waisted tunic and white collar, show a book to his father. The style of the older daughter's dress, with its V-pointed bodice, collar and narrow sleeves, as well as her ringleted, chignoned hair, dates this group too, to about 1845 (see Figs. 3 and 5). Similar clothing to that worn by the men and boys (see Fig. 6) in both these family silhouettes can be found in a catalogue produced by Hyams, a London ready-to-wear manufacturing company in 1851 (see Figs 7 and 8).[101] Whether or not these two families purchased bespoke or this type of ready-made clothing is of course unknown. A clear feature of this silhouette is the detail of the decorative carpet on which they all stand, giving the whole silhouette a sumptuous flavour. Conversation piece silhouettes, such as this, can however raise problems in pin pointing minute sartorial details owing to the small size of individual figures and drawing out precise dates might lead to a misconstruing of facts and must be undertaken with care.

Silhouette portraiture of individuals of the period thus offer an opportunity to scrutinize the subject's appearance closely and if, details are clear, they offer too the possibility of adding dates to undated images. Fig. 9 for example, shows a portrait of a young woman, painted in a green tone by H. Lenthall, who worked from 222, Regent Street London, one of the most famous shopping streets in London. The image is painted on card in base colour dark grey, with a greenish costume over it with clothing detail defined by a layer of black and some gilding added to the hair. The drop-shaped earrings and necklace are in Chinese white. The frame is of dark brown *papier maché* with a decorative hook on the top of the frame - a cheaper imitation of high quality framing, such as that described by Penley Knipe: 'a wooden frame with a black Japanned finish, gold fillet, oval-shaped domed glass, and decorative brass hanger in a leaf design'.[102] This was considered to be an expensive choice.

Both the cut of the sleeves, the collar and the hairstyle of the young woman in the Lenthall portrait are worth noticing. This portrait features a side view of a tailored collar and the dropped shoulder seam and the full gathers of an exceptionally large balloon-sleeved garment, possibly a dress or a coat. The extreme fullness of the sleeves date this silhouette around 1832-34 before the collapse of these huge sleeves

101 See *Hyams, Tailor and National Clothier,* 86, Oxford Street, catalogue, 1851, University of Brighton Dress and Textiles Teaching Collection.

102 Knipe, 'Paper Profiles' 210.

from around 1836 into a series of smaller puffed styles (see Fig. 10). The unknown sitter in the silhouette wears a necklace which appears to be made of pearls. Her age could be speculated to be around her early to mid-twenties. It is hard to determine whether the colour of the sitter's costume was actually the pale green of the silhouette or whether that colour was chosen through the artist's own imagination.

Conclusion

The 1840s witnessed the gradual introduction of photography which produced an exact replica of a living person within seconds[103] and offered a huge commercial challenge to silhouette artists. As this text has shown, one method they adopted for defeating this new competition was by high lighting their silhouettes with the addition of shading, colour and strokes of gold paint to clothes, jewellery and accessories. A silhouette artist could perhaps ensure the survival of her/his business by glorifying the persona of the sitter in this way by making them appear as elegant, contemporary and sophisticated as possible. A touch of gold and a wash of colour was the perfect solution, though as Rosenfeld explains, that necessitated much patience by the sitter because an elaborately painted profile could take up to one to two hours to complete.[104]

Silhouettes can thus be expressive of period fashions and life styles of men, women and children. Identities of sitters and less popular artists and the venue of creation of a silhouette, however, often remain unknown unless recorded on the silhouette itself or made by an artist with a recognizable style, or through a family memory passed down the generations. A few archives survive of key artists like Edouart,[105] who maintained a portfolio of his works and signed them, providing significant and authentic information as well as greater understanding of the method, exact provenance, date and time and the identities of his sitters. These 1830s/40s silhouette conversation pieces and individual portraits represent the last stages of the widespread popularity of the work of England's silhouette artists.

103 Knipe, 'Paper Profiles,' 208-209.
104 Rosenfeld, *Miniatures and Silhouettes in Montreal*, 66.
105 Laughon, *August Edouart*, 389-392.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

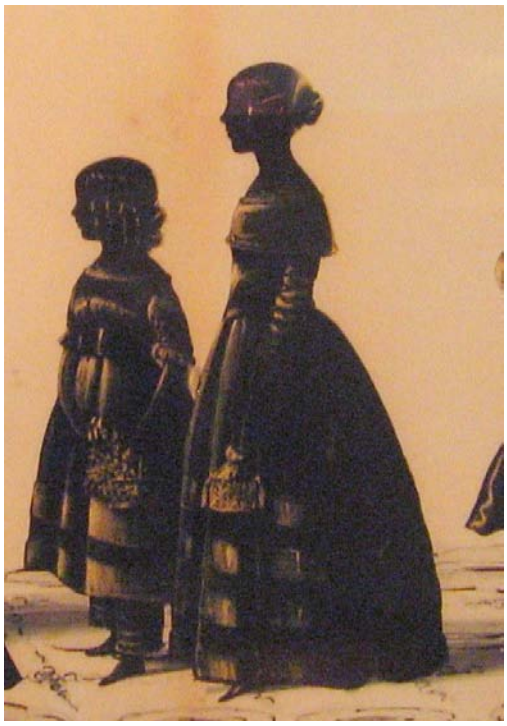

Fig. 5

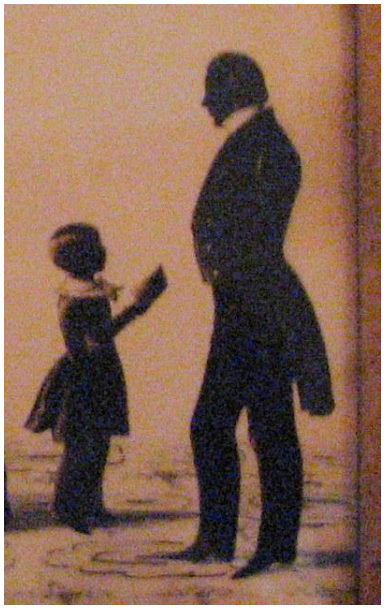

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

HYAM & CO., 86, OXFORD ST., & 36, GRACECHURCH ST.
HYAM & CO.'S DRESS COAT.
Dress Clothing and Mourning may be selected for immediate use.

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

Figure List.

Fig. 1. Family of Mr. and Mrs. Ransome by George Angelo Crowhurst, 6th Feb. 1834. Acquired from Christies at South Kensington. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 2. Detail of older woman from Ransome Family Group silhouette, 1834. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 3. Fashions for November 1844, *Illustrated London News*, Vol. 5, p. 348. With thanks to St. Peter's House Library, University of Brighton.

Fig. 4. Unknown family group by The Royal Victoria Gallery, about 1845. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 5. Detail of two young women, ibid.

Fig. 6. Father and son, ibid.

Fig. 7. Boy's tunic, 1851, from Hyams's tailoring catalogue, 1851. University of Brighton Dress and Textiles History Teaching Collection.

Fig. 8. Formal dress coat, 1851 from Hyams's tailoring catalogue, 1851. University of Brighton Dress and Textiles History Teaching Collection.

Fig. 9. Unknown young woman, by H. Lenthall, about 1832. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 10. Walking Dress, *La Belle Assembleé*, May, 1832. With thanks to St. Peter's House Library, University of Brighton.

Bibliography.

Bullard, Daphne. 'Hats, Bonnets and Hairstyles 1830-60'. *Costume* 3: supplement 1 (1969). Print.

Dorment, Richard. 'The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life - The Conversation Piece'. *Daily Telegraph,* 4 May 2009. Web. 28 May 2013. http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/press-release/the-conversation

Ginsburg, Madeleine. *Victorian Dress in Photographs*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1982. Print.

Laughon, Helen, Nel Laughon, and Fidèle-Augustin-Amant-Constant Edouart. *August Edouart*: *A Quaker Album: American and English Duplicate Silhouettes, 1827-1845*. Richmond, VA: Cheswick Press, 1987. Web. 15 May 2013. http://ojs.libraries.psu.edu/

Hickman, Peggy. *Silhouettes: A Living Art*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1975. Print.

Knipe, Penley. 'Paper Profiles, American Portrait Silhouettes'. *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 41: 3 (2002): 203-223. JSTOR. Web. 15 May 2013.

Rosenblum, Robert. 'The Origin of Painting: A Problem in the Iconography of Romantic Classicism'. *The Art Bulletin* 39.4 (1957): 279-290. JSTOR. Web. 15 May 2013.

Rosenfeld, Roslyn Margaret. *Miniatures and Silhouettes in Montreal, 1760-1860*. Master's thesis. Montreal: Concordia University, 1981. PDF. Web. 15 May 2013. http://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/3683/.

Rutherford, Emma. *Silhouettes.* New York : Rizzoli, 2009. Print.

Chapter 6

Shadow, Dress and Identity 1890-1914

Gabriella Mihok

Introduction

Silhouettes were at their peak of fashion between 1770 and 1860,[106] after which the advent of photography saw the popularity of the silhouette diminish as photography took over as the favoured means to capture a person's likeness in an affordable and accessible way. However, the practice of making silhouettes did not disappear completely, although the professional art of silhouette painting with exquisitely fine detail on plaster, glass or card, often with gold or bronze embellishment[107] did begin to fade.[108] By 1895 the most common method for creating silhouettes was to cut them out using scissor-work and then to mount the cut-out onto a backing board, occasionally adding detail with watercolour. Silhouette artists (also known as shadow artists or profilists), were trading from venues such as department stores and seaside piers, and provided an amusing diversion rather than fulfilling a serious need.[109]

The silhouette had become became a decorative object, but a decorative object can still possess meaning. In this chapter I am going to explore the silhouette, such as Fig. 1, a cut-out silhouette by Charles Handrup with thinned black watercolour detail for feathers and white highlights on shoes of about 1914, as an expression of personal identity, looking at dress and the significance of shadow. I hope to show the 'expressive capacity'[110] of the silhouette.

Shadow and Identity

Peggy Hickman in her book *Silhouettes*, suggests that in addition to photography, modern lighting was also partly responsible for the decline in popularity of silhouette art, especially the hobby of making silhouettes at home; overhead lighting did not create the atmospheric deep shadows of candlelight and lamps.[111] However,

106 Peggy Hickman, *Silhouettes* (London: Cassell, 1968) 5.
107 Hickman, *Silhouettes*, 20-23.
108 Peggy Hickman, *Two Centuries of Silhouettes* (London: A. and C. Black, 1971) 144.
109 Hickman, *Two Centuries of Silhouettes*, 144.
110 Nancy Forgione, '"The Shadow Only": Shadow and Silhouette in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris,' *Art Bulletin* 81.3 (1999) 491.
111 Hickman, *Silhouettes*, 8.

Nancy Forgione in her essay 'Shadow and Silhouette in Late Nineteenth Century France', suggests that modern electric lighting may have actually enhanced interest in the use of silhouette in fine art, as the bright light banished nuance and caused a starker contrast between dark and light: 'Although the artistic use of the silhouette did not depend on actual lighting conditions, the availability of those conditions could stimulate the experience of seeing in terms of silhouette and high contrast rather than in terms of chiaroscuro'.[112] Nancy Forgione argues that in the late nineteenth century the shadow found a new autonomy in fine art.[113] She discusses the shadow as a metaphor for a person's 'essence',[114] and examines the capacity of a silhouette to express that essence.[115] The use of silhouette to express a person's essence would suggest that the shadow can actually be *more* indicative of a person's identity than more obvious outward appearances.

Outward appearance is a way of expressing identity saying to other people, to strangers who do not know us. The silhouette masks much of the sitter's appearance, including the face and perhaps most importantly, the eyes, but I would argue that in the silhouette the sitter's identity, by which I mean their personal distinctiveness, or essence, is still apparent.

Silhouettes and Dress

A person's distinctiveness is partly apparent in the clothes they choose to wear, the outline of which can be clearly seen in a silhouette. The proliferation of printed material in the public sphere from the mid nineteenth century such as posters and illustrated journals and magazines, brought visual images of fashionable dress to a wide audience,[116] and much of the poster art and illustration of this era included pared-down and stylised images in black and white or simple colour blocks, reminiscent of the silhouette.[117] So in the silhouette we have dress and the shadow combined in the creation and visual projection of an individual identity.

The sitter in American profilist Baron Scotford's silhouette (Fig.2), a cut-out with

112 Forgione, '"The Shadow Only,"' 497.
113 Forgione, '"The Shadow Only,"' 490.
114 Forgione, '"The Shadow Only,"' 491, 497.
115 Forgione, '"The Shadow Only,"' 492.
116 Margaret Denny, 'Framing the Victorians: Photography, Fashion and Identity,' *The Places and Spaces of Fashion, 1800-2007*, ed. John Potvin (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009) 34.
117 See for example Auchentaller, *February*, 1901, woodcut illustration for *Ver Sacrum*, Image Number: BAL46280, *Bridgeman Education* [n.d.] and Felix Vallotton, *The Violin*, from the series *Musical Instruments*, 1896-97, woodcut, Image Number: CH614944 *Bridgeman Education* [n.d.]

painted white and grey detailing on costume and painted grey chair and stool, of about 1911, could be said to be expressing her identity through the bold fashion statement of her outsized hat and her fashionable dress, and is further reiterating her identity through posing for a shadow portrait. The silhouette is cut-out with the addition of painted black feathers, white and grey detailing on the costume and grey chair and stool. The subject's enormous hat is exploding with feathers and an almost identical example can be seen in the illustration by Boely, 'Toilettes pour l'Apres-Midi', from *Les Modes of* August, 1911. (Fig.3). This large silhouette (Fig. 2) was used by Scotford as a promotional piece, possibly in his booth in the Oxford Street department store, Selfridge's, London. [118]

Scotford was known for his freehand scissor-work and detailed slash-work,[119] and this is an extremely fine example. The subject's left arm is black against the white background, and her right arm is white against the black ground of her skirt. She sits sideways on a painted chair (although the chair is not altogether convincing), her posture is upright and elegant but her left arm drapes casually on the back of the chair, which makes the pose informal. A long band of lace trails delicately down to the floor from her bodice. Her dress of fitted bodice and long, full skirt is accessorised with a fan and a long string of pearls; pearls were fashionable at this time and the eccentric *demi-mondaine* of the Belle Époque, Marchesa Louisa Casati, famously wore a string of pearls seven metres long.[120] However, it is the hat that catches the eye and its size and style is noteworthy.

By 1911 as female dress became slimmer, hats became increasingly voluminous,[121] and the enormous hats worn by fashionable middle and upper class women were satirised in both England[122] and France for clumsy impracticality, as in this example, (Fig. 4) by Jobbé-Duval, *Le Thé*, from *Les Modes of* June 1912. Unfortunately, like this example in Scotford's silhouette, so many hat designs at this time also incorporated copious amounts of feathers that this demand for exotic plumage in fashionable millinery led to the mass slaughter of many species of bird. In particular, egrets, birds of paradise, great crested grebes and kittiwakes were being inhumanely

118 Information courtesy of the Secretary, *Silhouette Collectors Club*, February 2013.
119 John Woodiwiss, *British Silhouettes* (London: Country Life, 1965) 86.
120 Christopher Bedford, 'Maurice de Rothschild's "Remembrance of Things Past": Costume Obsession and Decadence, the Collection of a Belle Époque Dandy,' *The Places and Spaces of Fashion, 1800-2007*, ed. John Potvin (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 81.
121 Linda Watson, *Twentieth Century Fashion*, 1999 (London: Carlton Books, 2003) 22.
122 Watson, *Twentieth Century Fashion*, 22, 29.

destroyed by the thousands; the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds was formed in Britian as a response to this threat to the survival of wild birds.[123]

Figure 5 shows another fashionably large and feathered hat. The silhouette is by Huardel Bly, who traded from Brighton's West Pier from around 1912 until the early 1920s when he was succeeded by the silhouettist Hubert Leslie.[124] Bly, a Frenchman and self-described 'silhouettist, caricaturist and painter-etcher',[125] had resided in England for more than twenty years.[126] He worked in freehand scissor-work and also with the aid of various mechanical devices, such as a camera lucida, which is an optical tool for transposing the viewed image onto a surface for drawing; Bly claimed to have taken 50,000 portraits using the device.[127] He would occasionally add gold or coloured highlights,[128] but is known for his clever use of slashes cut into the black paper to suggest shirt collars or jewellery etc.[129] In this example, the long slash in the paper rather beautifully indicates the figure's cane; the line continues in black and merges into Bly's signature.

This is a wonderful example of Bly's work. Having received formal art training for ten years,[130] his talent is apparent in this image, created completely with scissor-work. There is a strong sense of movement in this piece; the female figure looks as though she is about to wrap her fur around her shoulders and walk away. Her clothes typify the slim elegance of women's tailored clothes of the pre-war period with the fashionably tiny shoe and large, domed hat; indeed, her head and hat seems too large and heavy for her slender neck to sustain, especially as the head is attached by the slenderest black line to represent her neck – a clever and effective technique. The delicate features of her face, the use of background white to suggest a collar, and the subtle curve of her shoulder and upper arm shows Bly's technical training. The similarities between Bly's silhouette and the fashion illustration from *The Ladies' Realm* (Fig. 6) which shows New Fashions for 1911-12, including this tailored costume trimmed with collar of 'cerise velvet edged with skunk ' are striking, notably the tailored outfit, the shape of the hat, the one tiny shoe protruding from

123 'History of the RSPB,' *RSPB*, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, 15 January 2009.
124 Woodiwiss, *British Silhouettes*, 84.
125 Mrs. E. Nevill Jackson, *Brighton Silhouettists*, Hove: Hove Public Library, [n.d.], 4.
126 Woodiwiss, *British Silhouettes*, 84.
127 Jackson, *Brighton Silhouettists*, 4.
128 Jackson, *Brighton Silhouettists*, 4.
129 Charles Burns, 'The Silhouette Tradition of Brighton Pier: The West Pier,' *Silhouette History*, September 1997.
130 Jackson, *Brighton Silhouettists*, 4.

beneath the skirt and the pose with the fur stole held behind the back.

Arguably clothes dictate physicality - the restrictions of a corset, the weight of a hat, the pinch of a tightly-buttoned, high-heeled shoe or boot, such as this example, (Fig. 7) in black glacé and white kid leather, with buttoned front, manufactured in Vienna, and retailed by *Stagg and Mantle*, Leicester Square, London, in about 1915. Possibly the female figure in Bly's silhouette was self-consciously imitating poses seen in magazines, identifying herself with the latest fashion.

Feminisation of Dress

During the years leading to the First World War, hats became smaller[131] and female dress began to be designed to be more adaptable to movement,[132] which one could argue reflected gradually increasing demands for the emancipation of and rights for women. The silhouette at the beginning of this piece (Fig. 1) by Charles Handrup, a Danish silhouettist who traded from the department store D. H. Evans in London, shows a looser, less tightly-fitted coat and a smaller hat. Handrup has added watercolour embellishments to the feathers and white highlights on the shoes,[133] although the image is arguably more static and formal than the examples by Scotford and Bly.

Masculine tailoring techniques were adjusting to the requirements of a new generation of far more active women by the 1860s and female tailored clothing had been growing more feminised, through the use of lighter-weight cloth in brighter colours and smaller patterns. The masculinised tailored styles worn by dress reformers and the university-educated 'New Woman,' as seen in Figure 8 (a silhouette of about 1895, which shows exactly this style of smartly tailored walking costume) however, set a different tone, disliked by many women. [134]

The female silhouette structured through corsetry was altering. The stiff Victorian corset evolved in the early 1900s into the contorting s-bend corset that rounded a woman's chest and pushed back her hips. But after 1908 and through the 1910s, the fashionable figure straightened up and became slimmer. Dress fabrics were

131 Watson, *Twentieth Century Fashion,* 24.
132 Watson, *Twentieth Century Fashion,* 28.
133 Information courtesy of the Secretary, *Silhouette Collectors Club*, February 2013.
134 Lou Taylor, 'Wool Cloth and Gender: The Use of Woollen Cloth in Women's Dress in Britain, 1865-85,' *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning and Identity*, ed. Amy de la Haye and Elizabeth Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) 30-48.

generally becoming softer and lighter to wear and designs more flowing and less dependent upon corsets than the rigid silhouettes of preceding decades.[135] This taller, straighter silhouette would eventually evolve into the corsetless tubular shapes of the 1920s.[136] Women's tailored suits at this time were also designed in response to the rising popularity of motoring; the cut of the jacket was less tight across the chest and upper arms to enable manoeuvrability.[137] This lighter and looser fit can be seen in a grey wool day suit with gold embroidery (Fig. 9) from the collection of Worthing Museum and Art Gallery.

Conclusion

When using the silhouette as an object of study there is much that it will be unable to tell us, an obvious example being the colour and pattern of fabrics worn by the sitter; the world is reduced to black and white. Also, during this period silhouettes were mostly full length or head and shoulders profiles with little in the way of background; the type of elaborate conversation pieces of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which depicted domestic scenes in the family home with furniture and furnishings, are largely absent.

As silhouette artists were trading from venues in the public space such as department stores, details such as hairstyles are not visible as the sitters for the portrait are still wearing outdoor hats. However, what we cannot see can bring into relief what we can see - the proliferation of hats being an example of this; it tells us that hats were ubiquitous during this era and it also indicates the styles of hat that were being worn.

Photography did not render the silhouette extinct; the art continued alongside photography as a different form of representation. However, I would argue that the silhouettist's venue in a place of leisure such as a seaside pier, combined with the concealed facial features of the silhouette, which offers ambiguity and therefore potentially less self-consciousness in the sitter, allow a greater capacity for informality and therefore more natural behaviour. In this sense I would argue that the silhouette can reveal more than a photograph about the sitter's 'essence'.

---

135 Design for evening dresses by Melanie Vermont, 1913, Victoria and Albert Museum (London) [n.d.].
136 Design for evening dresses by Melanie Vermont, 1913, Victoria and Albert Museum (London) [n.d.].
137 Watson, *Twentieth Century Fashion*, 24.

Of course it is difficult to know how much artistic license was used by the silhouettists. As Huardel Bly declared: 'You are making a picture, make a pleasing one'.[138] Through the silhouette however, we can see the changing shape of fashion and gain an insight into the creation of personal identity through dress and the shadow.

Fig. 1

138 Jackson, *Brighton Silhouettists*, 4.

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

A Fanciful
Tailor Costume

In a tinder shade wool velvet trimmed with buttons of the same material. The collar looks sweetly pretty in cerise velvet edged with skunk. The band of the foundation skirt should be in black Liberty to match the waistband

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

Figure List.

Fig. 1. Handrup, cut-out silhouette with thinned black watercolour detail for feathers and white highlights on shoes, c. 1914. Property of private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 2. Baron Scotford, cut-out silhouette with painted white and grey detailing on costume and painted grey chair and stool, c. 1911. Property of private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 3. Boely, *Toilettes pour l'Apres-Midi*, illustration, *Les Modes*, Aug 1911, p26, with thanks to St. Peters House Library, University of Brighton.

Fig. 4. Jobbé-Duval, *Le Thé*, illustration, *Les Modes*, June 1912, p2, with thanks to St. Peter's House Library, University of Brighton.

Fig. 5. Huardel Bly, cut-out silhouette, Brighton, 1913. Property of private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 6. 'Some Charming Fashions for the New Year: A Fanciful Tailor Costume', *The Lady's Realm Supplement*, 1911-12, with thanks to St. Peter's House Library.

Fig. 7. Black glacé and white kid leather boot with buttoned front, lined with peach satin. Manufactured in Vienna, retailed by *Stagg and Mantle*, Leicester Square, London, c1915. From the costume collection at Worthing Museum. Photograph, G. Mihok, 17 Feb 2013 with kind permission from Worthing Museum and Art Gallery.

Fig. 8. Silhouette of woman in a tailored costume of about 1895. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 9. Grey wool day suit, cotton lined with five mother of pearl buttons and decorative silk embroidery, c1911. 1966/397/1-2. Worthing Museum and Art Gallery, with thanks. Photograph, G. Mihok, 17 Feb 2013.

Fig. 10. Bodice of day dress, lavender coloured with applied lace trimming about 1908-10, Ghent Collection, University of Brighton Dress History Teaching Collection, with thanks.

Bibliography.

Bedford, Christopher. 'Maurice de Rothschild's "Remembrance of Things Past": Costume Obsession and Decadence, the Collection of a Belle Epoque Dandy'. *The Places and Spaces of Fashion, 1800-2007*. Ed. John Potvin. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009. Print.

Burns, Charles. 'Baron Scotford's Slash Work'. *Silhouette History*. September 1997. Web. 10 December 2012. http://www.silhouette-parlour.co.uk/p46_slash.html

Burns, Charles. 'Le Baron Henri Scotford'. *Silhouette History*. September 1997. Web. 10 December 2012. http://www.silhouette-parlour.co.uk/p45_scotford.html

Burns Charles. 'The Silhouette Tradition of Brighton Pier: The West Pier'. *Silhouette History*. September 1997. Web. 26 March 2013. http://www.silhouette-parlour.co.uk/p42_brighton.html

Davis, Fred. *Fashion, Culture and Identity*. London: University of Chicago Press, 1999. Print.

de la Haye, Amy and Wilson, Elizabeth, eds. *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning and Identity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999. Print.

Denny, Margaret. 'Framing the Victorians: Photography, Fashion and Identity'. *The Places and Spaces of Fashion, 1800-2007*. Ed. John Potvin. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009. Print.

Forgione, Nancy. '"The Shadow Only": Shadow and Silhouette in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris'. *The Art Bulletin* 81.3 (1999): 490-512. JSTOR. Web. 13 March 2013. http://www.jstor.org.stable/3051354

Gillespie, Jessie (illustrator). 'Vogue Announces the Spring & Summer Fashions'. *Vogue (USA)*. April 1915. *Condé Nast Store*. Web. 7 January 2013. http://www.condenaststore.com/-sp/Vogue-April-1915-Prints_i8484389_.htm

Hickman, Peggy. *Two Centuries of Silhouettes*. London: A. and C. Black, 1971. Print.

Hickman, Peggy. *Silhouettes*. London: Cassell, 1968. Print.

'History of the RSPB'. *RSPB*. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. 15 January 2009. Web. 17 February 2013. http://www.rspb.org.uk/about/history/

Jackson, Mrs. E. Nevill. *Brighton Silhouettists*. Hove: Hove Public Library, [n.d.] Print.

Ladies Field (London). 1895-1907.

Ladies Realm, (London). 1910-1912.

Les Modes (Paris). 1910-1913.

Linda and Peter. 'Handrup Hand Cut Silhouette Artist Postcards'. *About Postcards*. 16 June 2007. Web. 8 Jan 2013. http://aboutcards.blogspot.co.uk/2007/06/handrup-hand-cut-silhouette-artist.html#!/2007/06/handrup-hand-cut-silhouette-artist.html

Mégroz, Rodolphe Louis. *Profile Art Through the Ages: A Study of the Use and Significance of Profile and Silhouette from the Stone Age to Puppet Films.* London: The Art Trade Press, 1948. Print.

'Snipshots of Celebrities by Baron Scotford'. British Pathé Studio, London. 1933. Web. 28 November 2012. http://www.britishpathe.com/video/snipshots-of-celebrities

Stidger, William L. *Soldier Silhouettes On Our Front*. Illustrated by Jessie Gillespie. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918. Web. 10 December 2012. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18078/18078-h/18078-h.htm

Taylor, Lou. *The Study of Dress History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002. Print.

Taylor, Lou. 'Wool Cloth and Gender: The Use of Woollen Cloth in Women's Dress in

Britain, 1865-85'. *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning and Identity*. Ed. Amy de la Haye and Elizabeth Wilson. Manchester: Manchester. University Press, 1999. Print.
Design for evening dresses by Melanie Vermont, 1913. Victoria and Albert Museum (London) [n.d.]. Web. 25 March 2013. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O153657/design-vermont/
Watson, Linda. *Twentieth Century Fashion.* 1999. London: Carlton Books, 2003. Print.
Woodiwiss, John. 'Brighton's Silhouettes'. *Sussex County Magazine* 26 (1952). Print.
Woodiwiss, John. *British Silhouettes*. London: Country Life, 1965. Print.

Chapter 7

The Material Culture of Nostalgia: Hubert Leslie, Baron Scotford and Twentieth Century Silhouette Portraiture

Jaclyn Pyper

This chapter examines developments in silhouette making and consumption in twentieth century Britain, when the producers and consumers of silhouette portraits displayed, in varying degrees, feelings of nostalgia towards early nineteenth century Britain. The small number of remaining silhouette cutters resisted the encroachment of technology and sought to revive a once popular and accessible form of portraiture. In their attempts to preserve a dying craft skill, they defended its artistic merits and extolled its virtues through the instructional manuals they wrote. For the consumer, silhouettes held an appeal in their bygone novelty and simplicity.

Baron Scotford (1884-?) was an American silhouettist who toured through Paris, Brussels, and Rome before arriving in Britain in 1909. After working for several seasons in Blackpool and Glasgow, Scotford first opened a shop at 129 Regent Street, and then later secured a position cutting portraits at Gamage's department store in London.[139] He would ultimately return to the United States, setting up his 'Snip Sketch Studio' in Atlantic City, New Jersey prior to the Second World War.[140]

Hubert Leslie (1890-1976) was a British silhouettist and leading figure in the revival of silhouette portraiture during the early twentieth century. Taking over from Huardel Bly on the West Pier, in Brighton, Leslie cut thousands of silhouettes for a mostly tourist clientele between 1922 and 1936, when he moved to another address in Brighton, remaining there until at least 1950.[141] His standard technique involved cutting through two layers of paper, keeping the duplicate created through this process in a series of personal record books.[142] Along with over 25,000 portraits that he cut over fifty years of both celebrities and everyday customers, Leslie also created pieces of silhouette art featured in several exhibitions.[143]

Social Context: Interwar Britain

---

139 Peggy Hickman, *Silhouettes: A Living Art*. (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1975) 72.
140 Emma Rutherford, *Silhouette: The Art of Shadow* (New York: Rizzoli, 2009) 229.
141 'LESLIE: Hubert Leslie, 1890-1976,' *Handlist of the Names in the Reference Collection*, National Portrait Gallery [n.d.].
142 Ten of these record books are held in the archives of the Natonal Portrait Gallery, London.
143 Mrs. E. Nevill Jackson, *Silhouettes: A History and Dictionary of* Artists, 1931 (New York: Dover, 1981) 124.

For both Leslie and Scotford, the peak of their careers as silhouettists occurred during the 1920s and 1930s, or the interwar period. These decades witnessed a significant amount of social and cultural change, intensified by the events of the First World War. Even the social changes whose beginnings had emerged before the outbreak of the war – the labour and female suffrage movements, most notably – seemed to gain strength from and finally make progress after the worldwide conflict.[144] While there may have been feelings of optimism surrounding these advancements, there were also underlying emotions of uncertainty and disillusionment. Michael Levenson refers to these emotions as 'an alienation, an uncanny sense of moral bottomlessness, [and] a political anxiety,' which in turn led to widespread skepticism towards the ethical and cultural foundations of society.[145] The world had been exposed to the dark side of technology and mechanisation through the horrors of modern warfare, captured in all its visceral reality on film and disseminated through the mass media.

Contrary to the now popular collective memory of the 1920s as a decade-long, 'roaring' party, the years immediately following the First World War were simultaneously filled with uncertainty and unrest. Although there was a cultural shift occurring towards modernism, exemplified in the abstract paintings, stream-of-consciousness novels, and expressionist poems being produced at the time, a nostalgic interest in the previous century also lingered. Linda Hutcheon makes the connection between these two modes of thinking, speculating that 'if the present is considered irredeemable, you can either look back or forward. The nostalgic and utopian impulses share a common rejection of the here and now'.[146] While artistic communities were experimenting with new techniques and evoking the future, as Mowat describes in his history of interwar Britain, 'there was [also] a stirring of patriotic feeling and a nostalgic respect for the Victorians, whose solid virtues had raised the British Empire to a power and majesty sadly lacking in the age of the dictators'.[147] There was therefore a collective nostalgia in the years following the war for what was imagined as a moral highpoint and a stable, powerful time for Great Britain.

In the case of Hubert Leslie, working on the West Pier by 1922, the reasons for his nostalgic tendencies become more obvious when the social climate he witnessed is taken into consideration. Brighton attracted a number of undesirable people and saw a resulting decline in its reputation in the years following the war. Rival gangs centred around the

144 Michael Levenson, 'Introduction,' *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 4.
145 Levenson, 'Introduction,' 5.
146 Linda Hutcheon, 'Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern,' *University of Toronto English Language (UTEL) Main Collection*, University of Toronto, 1998.
147 Charles Loch Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars: 1918-1940* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1959) 522.

racecourse clashed violently in the streets, arousing countrywide fear through reports of their penchant for slashing their victims with razors.[148] This was the pre-World War II Brighton of Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* – however, it was not the first time the town had found itself under these circumstances. According to Clifford Musgrave, these 'undesirable folk' had followed the wealthy classes down from London in the 1920s 'just as a horde of thieves, sharks, tricksters, panders and harlots had swarmed down to Brighton in the wake of the Prince of Wales and his pleasure-loving followers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries'.[149] Due to the tendency for feelings of nostalgia to enhance the positive aspects of the past while suppressing the negative, it is not surprising that Leslie had overlooked the unfavourable parts of Brighton's golden age and chosen to focus on a more lighthearted part of its past through his revival of silhouette cutting. In the 1920s and 30s Brighton became a hugely popular holiday destination, especially for day trips by train or charabanc and visitors flocked along the length of the town's two piers, where many entertainments were to be found, including the booths of silhouette artists.

Methods of Production

An increased interest in the production methods of silhouettes in the early twentieth century is apparent in the publication of several books on the subject. These instructional manuals, written by Leslie, Leonard Simms, and Raymond Lister, provide guidance on the tools and materials required, as well as the proper technique for cutting silhouettes. Detailed descriptions of the appropriate way to sharpen one's scissors, the best type of black paper and mounting card to use, and the difference between 'outside' and 'inside' cutting methods are just a few of the topics covered. Far from being strictly instructional manuals, however, these books also outline the state of the field at their time of writing and describe the challenges facing this nearly extinct craft.

All three of the authors devote significant space in their respective texts to express their distaste for photography. In his introduction to *Silhouettes and Scissor-Cutting*, Leslie's nostalgia is made clear as he lays out an impassioned case against the mechanized technology of the camera:

> But to those who understand and love the work of man's mind and hand, and can appreciate artistic expression at all, there can be no possible comparison between the inspiration of mind and eye and hand and the mere mechanical adjustment of lenses and chemical

148 Clifford Musgrave, *Life in Brighton: From the Earliest Times to the Present* (London: Faber, 1970) 387.
149 Musgrave, *Life in Brighton,* 387.

> processes. Temporarily dazzled by the miracles of scientific discovery during the last century, it is perhaps intelligible that our great-grandfathers were deluded into imagining that the machine-made product must of mathematical necessity be a truer and more perfect likeness than the hand-made article. The utter fallacy of this opinion has been exposed in countless other directions than that of picture-making. We, who stand at a greater distance from that era of superficial marvels, can get a better perspective of things, and can see that the machine, for all it soulless efficiency, cannot by any means be allowed to have matters all its own way.[150]

To these advocates of silhouette portraiture, photography represented more than just the reason for their chosen craft's decline. It was the embodiment of the modernisation and acceleration of life through new technologies and new ideas. Leslie in particular lamented this acceleration, claiming that modern life left no time or taste for the delicate work of silhouette cutting, as 'everything is speeded up and hectic, and many pleasant things have been neglected in the hurry and scurry of the twentieth century'.[151]

Beyond the evils of photography, the authors also cautioned against the use of any technology or modern techniques in the creation of silhouettes. As Simms explains, 'the art itself is of antique origin, and nothing is to be gained by attempting to modernize it; on the contrary every effort should be made to retain the charm of bygone centuries by attention to detail and delicacy'.[152] This includes the use of machines of various designs to assist in capturing the profile, for which Lister quotes the nineteenth century silhouettist Auguste Édouart: 'I do not call that art which is executed by a mechanical process'.[153] Furthermore, all three authors denounce the 'slash-cutting' technique as an unwelcome twentieth century addition to silhouette cutting. Used by some artists to suggest shading or folds in clothing, it was shunned by true connoisseurs, including Simms, who states 'it was never done in the antique, it ruins the simplicity which is, after all, one of the main charms of silhouette, and impairs the effect of pure outline upon which the entire value rests'.[154] It is of interest to note that Scotford chose to adopt this technique in his portraits, as exemplified in the four silhouettes in this study, placing him at odds with purists like Leslie, Simms, and Lister.

---

150 Hubert Leslie, *Silhouettes and Scissor Cutting* (London: John Lane, 1939) 11-12.
151 Leslie, *Silhouettes and Scissor Cutting*, 11.
152 Leonard A. Simms, *The Art of Silhouette Cutting* (London: Frederick Warne, 1937) 52.
153 Auguste Édouart, qted in Raymon Lister, *Silhouettes: An Introduction to their History and to the Art of Cutting and Painting Them* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1953) 32.
154 Simms, *The Art of Silhouette Cutting*, 33.

The difference in cutting method and style becomes obvious when one compares the Leslie silhouette in this study (Fig. 1) to those done by Scotford (Fig. 2-5). Hubert Leslie's silhouette of a young boy in a sailor suit of about 1925, of black paper mounted on white paper, is traditional in its simplicity, while Baron Scotford's four profiles of women and girls, 1925-27, in black paper mounted on white paper, evoke a more modern energy and feel, with their multiple slashes to depict sections of the sitter's hair or details in their clothing. Writing in his 1913 book *The Art of Silhouette*, the collector and enthusiast Desmond Coke described Scotford as an 'accomplished and rapid cutter' who 'snips [...] with astounding sureness as he turns [the paper] [...] hither and thither in a bewildering way'.[155] This is confirmed by the short film 'Snipshots of Celebrities,' produced by British Pathé Studios in 1933, which depicts him cutting the silhouette of a young girl in under thirty seconds.[156] Scotford sought to modernise his craft through his use of the slash cutting technique, and given his long and prolific career, the public clearly responded to it in a positive way. Fig. 4 shows just such a silhouette from a few years earlier of a little girls with long ringlets and a drop-waist dress, very typical of the period.

A further sense of modernity in Scotford's silhouettes can be seen in the fashionable dress of his sitters. Figures 3 and 5 show young women in slim, short late 1920s coats and cloche hats, one wearing a fur stole and carrying a handbag. All these accessories are similar in style to those available in Paris in the department stores 'La Samaritaine', and 'Au Louvre' as Figs. 6-10 reveal. At these stores, as in British department stores, similar fur stoles and handbags could be purchased. Elegant cloche hats were widely sold, even for little girls such as the one in Fig. 5, as well as sailor suits for little boys (Fig. 1 and 10).

Cultural Nostalgia

Fred Davis uses the term 'simple nostalgia' to describe the type of nostalgia that represents 'the belief that things were better (more beautiful, healthier, happier, more civilised, more exciting) then than now'.[157] Additionally, in her book *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning*, Wilson defines several types of nostalgic feeling. One of these categories, Tom Vanderbilt's theory of 'displaced nostalgia,' contends that it is possible for individuals to feel a strong sense of nostalgia towards a past era despite not having lived through it or therefore experienced it firsthand.[158]

155 Desmond Coke, *The Art of Silhouette* (London: Martin Secker, 1913) 218-219.
156 'Snipshots of Celebrities,' (British Pathé Studio, London, 1933).
157 Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: Macmillan, 1979) 18.
158 Tom Vanderbilt, 'The Nostalgia Gap (from the Baffler),' *Utne Reader*, July/August 1994, qted in Wilson, *Nostalgia*, 31.

The producers and consumers of twentieth century silhouette portraiture's nostalgic feelings can therefore be described as a combination of these two behaviours, or 'simple, displaced nostalgia'. Leslie and his contemporaries' books are filled with references to a pre-industrial and pre-photographic time when, according to them, life was simpler, slower, and full of charming past-times like silhouette cutting. Although these feelings are based in a collective memory of the past, they reside in and are triggered by present experiences.[159] Davis observed that 'in its collective manifestations nostalgia [...] thrives [...] on the rude transitions rendered by history, on the discontinuities and dislocations wrought by such phenomena as war, depression, civil disturbance, and cataclysmic natural disasters'.[160] In the wake of the First World War and all the rapid social changes that accompanied it, artists like Leslie and Scotford, and the members of the public who formed their clientele, chose to take comfort in reviving a tradition of the past. In taking these actions, they sought to temporarily restore a sense of stability and security to their lives at a time of historic discontinuity and widespread uncertainty.[161] Collective nostalgia can therefore be seen as a form of transitory escapism whose purpose becomes to lessen the shock of sudden social or cultural change.

Conclusion

Nostalgia remains a significant influence in today's popular culture, as evidenced by ongoing trends such as vintage clothing, the iPhone application *Instagram*, and the number of period pieces in film and on television. Nearly a century after Leslie and Scotford's days working as silhouette cutters in Interwar Britain, their era is now enjoying its own nostalgic revival through the television series *Downton Abbey* and *Boardwalk Empire*, and the soon to released film adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*. Nostalgia is nothing new; whenever there is disillusionment or doubt felt towards present events, it is in the nature of some people to look towards the past to regain a sense of, albeit false, security. Although this tendency is often considered a trivial one, there may be risks associated with an abundance of cultural nostalgia; for if nostalgia serves to distort our collective memory of the past for the sake of our present comfort, there is a danger that this distortion may permanently alter our understanding of past histories.

159 Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 10.
160 Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 49.
161 Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 103.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

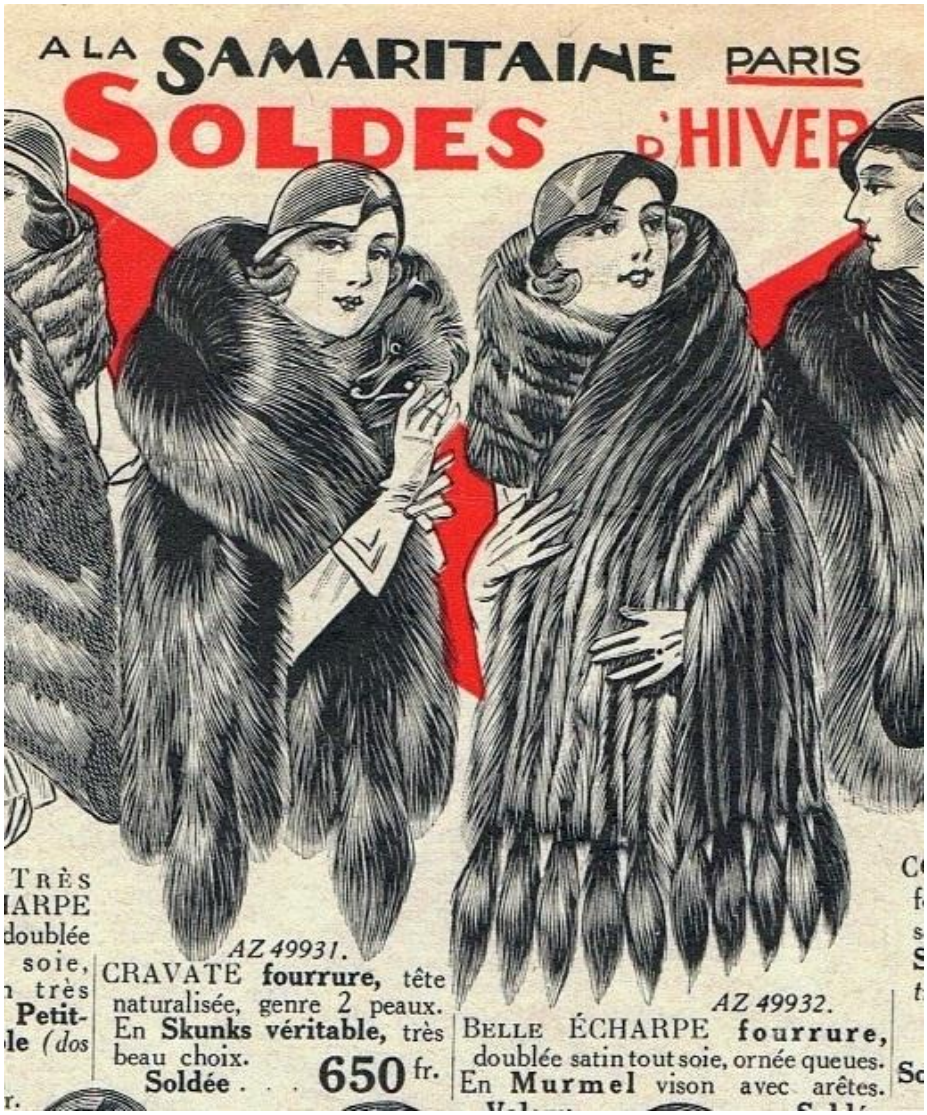
A LA SAMARITAINE PARIS
SOLDES D'HIVER
AZ 49931.
CRAVATE fourrure, tête naturalisée, genre 2 peaux. En Skunks véritable, très beau choix. Soldée . . . 650 fr.
AZ 49932.
BELLE ÉCHARPE fourrure, doublée satin tout soie, ornée queues. En Murmel vison avec arêtes.

Fig. 6

L 3080. SAC AUTO véritable box noir, havane ou acajou, à liserés, fond plat, doublure jersey, fermoir recouvert, poignée box. Dimensions 0m25 × 0m18. . . 99 fr.
L 3081. SAC plissé box souple, noir, marron ou acajou, doublure suédine, fermoir recouvert, poignée box. Dimensions 0m25 × 0m19. . . 49 fr.

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Aï 39946. CANOTIER paille à dents, bord mode, galon noir.
14 fr. et 9 fr.
Aï 39944.
BOY-SCOUT
12.75
Aï 39945.
8.50
Aï 39947.
JEAN-BART, paille fine, bord souple, bordure et galon marine.
A la Samaritaine.
13 fr.

Fig. 9

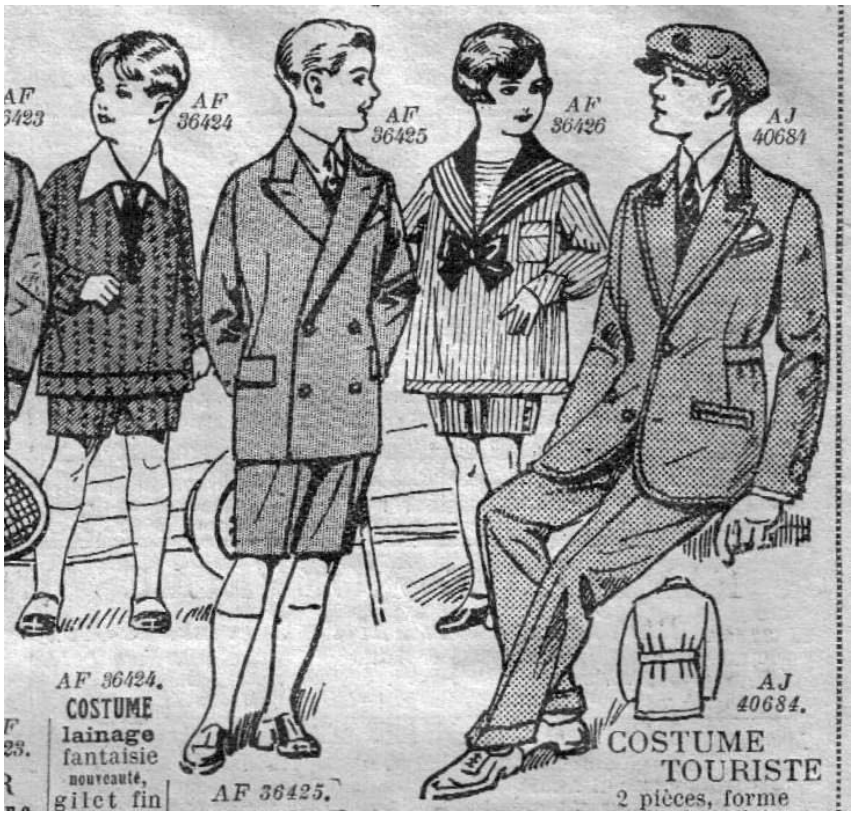
AF 36424
AF 36425
AF 36426
AJ 40684
AF 36424.
COSTUME
lainage
fantaisie
nouveauté,
gilet fin
AF 36425.
AJ 40684.
COSTUME
TOURISTE
2 pièces, forme

Fig. 10

Figure List.

Fig. 1. Silhouette of boy in sailor suit, Hubert Lesley, about 1925. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig 2. Silhouette of a young woman with cloche hat, slim coat and ringlets with slim coat, 1930, by Baron Scotford. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 3. Silhouette of a woman in coat, with fur stole, cloche hat and carrying a handbag, 1925, by Baron Scotford. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 4. Silhouette of a little girl in drop-waist dress with ringlets and hair ribbon, 1927, by Baron Scotford. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 5. Silhouette of mother and little daughter, in cloche hats, 1927 by Baron Scotford. Property of a private collector, with thanks.

Fig. 6. Fur stoles advertised on the cover of a catalogue from *La Samaritaine*, Paris, 1931. University of Brighton Dress and Textiles Teaching Collection.

Fig. 7. Leather handbags from the catalogue of *La Samaritaine,* Paris, April 1926. University of Brighton Dress and Textiles Teaching Collection.

Fig. 8. Fashionable cloche hat from the catalogue of *Au Louvre*, young girl's cloche c. 1924. University of Brighton Dress and Textiles Teaching Collection.

Fig. 9. Cloche hats for young girls, from the catalogue of *La Samaritaine,* Paris, April 1926. University of Brighton Dress and Textiles Teaching Collection.

Fig. 10. Boys' clothes, including sailor suit, from the catalogue of *La Samaritaine,* Paris, April 1926. University of Brighton Dress and Textiles Teaching Collection.

Bibliography.

Coke, Desmond. *The Art of Silhouette*. London: Martin Secker, 1913. Print.

Davis, Fred. *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. New York: Macmillan, 1979. Print.

Hickman, Peggy. *Silhouettes: A Living Art*. Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1975. Print.

Hutcheon, Linda. 'Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern'. *University of Toronto English Language (UTEL) Main Collection*. University of Toronto. 1998. Web. 1 December 2012. http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/criticism/hutchinp.html

Jackson, Mrs. E. Nevill. *Silhouettes: A History and Dictionary of Artists*. 1938. New York: Dover, 1981. Print.

'LESLIE: Hubert Leslie, 1890-1976'. *Handlist of the Names in the Reference Collection*. National Portrait Gallery [n.d.]. Web. 22 November 2012. http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/about/reference-collection/handlist.php#anchorL

Leslie, Hubert. *Silhouettes and Scissor Cutting.* London: John Lane, 1939. Print.

Levenson, Michael. 'Introduction'. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Ed. Michael Levenson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Print.

Lister, Raymond. *Silhouettes: An Introduction to their History and to the Art of Cutting and Painting Them*. London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1953. Print.

Mowat, Charles Loch. *Britain Between the Wars: 1918-1940*. London: Methuen, 1959. Print.

Musgrave, Clifford. *Life in Brighton: From the Earliest Times to the Present*. London: Faber, 1970. Print.

Rutherford, Emma. *Silhouette: The Art of The Shadow*. New York: Rizzoli, 2009. Print.

Simms, Leonard A. *The Art of Silhouette Cutting*. London: Frederick Warne, 1937. Print.

'Snipshots of Celebrities by Baron Scotford'. British Pathé Studio, London. 1933. Web. 22 November 2012. http://www.britishpathe.com/video/snipshots-of-celebrities

Wilson, Janelle L. *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning*. Lewisberg: Bucknell University Press, 2005. Print.

Conclusion

Silhouettes into the twenty-first century

Annebella Pollen

From their eighteenth century heyday, nineteenth century adaptation to their twentieth century fall from favour, the trajectory of the silhouette's biography seems to follow a sad decline. Although contributors to this text bring the story up to the interwar period, and close to home, with Baron Scotford and Hubert Leslie in Brighton, silhouette production persevered well into the twentieth century. The two-hundred year period selected for *Profiles of the Past: Silhouettes, Fashion and Image* follows the parameters of the private collection that is its focus, but the 1760-1960 dates are not meant to imply the birth and death of the form. In Brighton, for example, long a centre for profile-cutters since its fashionable Regency days, silhouette artists continued to ply their trade on the piers for many years after its heyday. Arthur Forrester, for example, had begun work as a profile cutter in the 1920s, and kept a popular silhouette booth on the Palace Pier until the late 1960s, latterly under the care of his son John Forrester (Figs. 1 and 2).

There is nothing so stimulating and intriguing to artists and historians as seemingly lost styles and formats. In the early 1990s, for example, at the same moment digital cameras outsold analogue and heralded a new technological era, cheap and leaky Diana cameras began to be celebrated and reissued as cult collector's items. In 2012, the last typewriter departed the factory production line straight onto the Science Museum shelves. In the twenty-first century, a revival of interest in craft and a vogue for all things vintage in design and fashion means that the silhouette's time has come again. As a decorative element and an artistic style, silhouette motifs reappear regularly in popular culture and fine art but, as with all revivals, their renaissance tells us more about the preoccupations of our own time than the period that is recalled. In each case, these silhouettes are reinterpretations and revisions rather than simple historical pastiche.

In his bestselling 2012 *Silhouettes from Popular Culture*, for example, popular artist Olly Moss compiled a velvet-bound gift book of profiles of instantly recognisable celebrities and characters from television and film - from Amy Winehouse to Star Wars' Darth Vader – reviving an antiquated form with a flippant, postmodern sense of humour. Also utilising a subversive wit, celebrated Scottish design duo Timorous Beasties now produce jacquard furnishing fabrics and wallpapers in a hybrid style of silhouettes and eighteenth century Toile de Jouy. In close-up, these silhouettes do not depict the pastoral scenes of rural repose that might be expected, however, but Glaswegian scenes of street drinkers, rough

sleepers and urban decay, emphasising the dark side of the shadow art. Ceramicist Andrew Tanner, formerly of Brighton University and now Head of Design at Poole Pottery, cuts silhouette outlines from white wall plates for a recent collection that seeks to revive a nostalgic English aesthetic as well as stimulating English ceramic manufacturing. These items include reissues of flying ducks and mugs featuring cross-stitched insults, showing how silhouettes can be rehabilitated as a historic motif that, with a touch of irony and a wink of kitsch, can be made fresh and modern. Paper cutter Rob Ryan revives the folksy, handmade and keepsake qualities of the silhouette, rather than its attempts at realistic depiction, for his romantic and whimsical pieces, now widely reproduced on magazine covers, greetings cards, T-shirts and even ceramic Staffordshire dogs. Ryan is one of an emerging number of artists working with paper whose work incorporates formal and stylistic elements from the silhouette but also pushes at the borderlines of its definition.

The sometimes challenging and conceptual new bodies of art work using paper - seen in publications and exhibitions such as Raven Smith's 2009 *Paper: Tear, Fold, Rip, Crease, Cut* and David Revere McFadden's *Slash: Paper under the Knife*, from the same year – incorporate elements from silhouettes with collage and artists' books, fine art and sculpture. Perhaps the most celebrated and indeed controversial of contemporary artists who utilises the silhouette as her medium of communication is Kara Walker, a young African-American artist who takes the blackness of the format, along with its eighteenth century origins, as points of departure from which to explore issues of sexuality, ethnicity and violence, often in the context of slavery. Mixing life-size silhouettes with shadow puppetry, Walker's sometimes nightmarish and always confrontational works are at the cutting edge of the revival in the cutting arts.

Despite - or perhaps because of - photography's ubiquity in the twenty-first century, silhouettes continue to endure. Their particular textural, graphic and craft qualities were never rendered fully obsolete by photography's multiple functions. As twenty-first century extension of the early automated silhouette technologies, for example, laser-cutting devices for reproducing cut work designs are now widely and cheaply available. Desktop computer hardware for home die-cutting ensures speedy, accurate production for card-makers and scrapbookers that eighteenth century practitioners could only have dreamed of. For those who still value the homemade skill of silhouettes, a small number of practitioners make a living from free-hand cutting. Arthur Forrester's grandson, John Speight, continues the family silhouette tradition, although has moved away from portraits (Fig. 3). Professional profilist and silhouette historian Charles Burns appears as entertainment at corporate events and produces on-the-spot mementos at weddings (Fig.

4). Each of these practices – new silhouette technologies and live silhouette performance – will be available to view in the exhibitions and events planned as part of the larger Profiles of the Past funded project.

On Brighton's remaining pier today, there may no longer be a silhouettist in residence, but it is still possible to have an instant souvenir image made. Photo booths produce novelty stickers at the touch of a button or, if you prefer, translate sitters' images into automated pencil drawings in the style of the Old Masters (or so it is claimed). Stalls offer the chance to have a 3D photographic image engraved in a transparent crystal cube; street artists at impromptu easels sell quick sketches to flatter or mock. Although the chance to have your personality divined by the shape of your profile is no longer available, graphologists, numerologists and tarot card readers are on hand. The silhouette booth may be just a ghostly shadow among the last traces of the ruined piers, but the spirit of the silhouette lives on.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

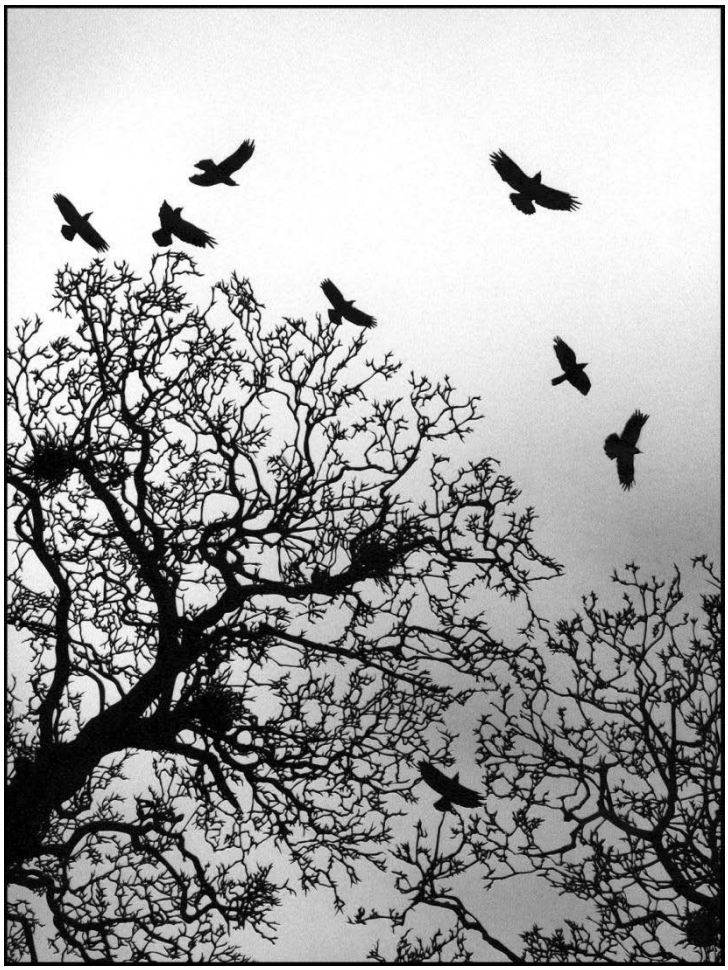

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Figure List.

Fig. 1: Arthur Forrester silhouette of woman in cloche hat, c. 1920s. Courtesy collection of Charles Burns, reproduced with thanks.

Fig. 2: John Forrester's silhouette booth, Palace Pier, Brighton 1966. Photograph by John Forrester, reproduced with permission of John Speight (pictured on the right), with thanks.

Fig. 3: 'Rooks', silhouette by John Speight (Arthur Forrester's grandson), 2013. Reproduced with thanks. http://www.johnspeight.co.uk

Fig. 4: Silhouettes of Lou Taylor, Annebella Pollen and Charlotte Nicklas (left to right), cut by Charles Burns, professional profilist, 2013. Reproduced with thanks. http://www.roving-artist.com/home.html

School of Humanities
University of Brighton
10-11 Pavilion Parade
Brighton
BN2 1RA
UK

Printed by The Reprographics Service, University of Brighton, UK, 2013

Editorial selection and material (c) 2013
Lou Taylor, Annebella Pollen and Charlotte Nicklas
Chapters (c) The contributors

Produced in collaboration with the Profiles of the Past project,
a Regency Town House initiative supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

For information see:
www.profilesofthepast.org.uk
www.rth.org.uk

The Profiles of the Past team is grateful to the students and staff
at the University of Brighton who contributed to this work
and agreed to make their research available to the project.

The Regency Town House

heritage lottery fund
LOTTERY FUNDED